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VCE® Units 3 & 4

ENGLISH Language

year YEAR 12

STUDY DESIGN 2024

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Selina Dennis, Natalie Gleeson
Luke Francis & Anna Stewart

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YEAR *year* 12

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Warning: First Nations readers are advised that this title contains the names of people who have passed away.

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Introduction

English Language Year 12 examines and unpacks the four areas of study across Units 3 and 4. Chapters 2–10 cover the areas of study in Unit 3: Language variation and purpose. In this unit you will explore the continuum of formality in language, including how informality and formality relate to an author's intent and contribute to the achievement of the purpose and functions of a text. Chapters 11–17 cover the areas of study in Unit 4: Language variation and identity. In Unit 4 you will learn about sociolinguistic topics in Australian society, such as how we present our identities through language and demonstrate our belonging to different groups; how we control and manipulate our language to include and exclude; and how we use language to negotiate social expectations and community attitudes.

The chapters in this book feature many examples of language use in Australia from a variety of different text types, with accompanying annotated worked examples. These worked examples are designed to showcase high-level writing for the relevant area of study. You are encouraged to read these examples and their annotations to help prepare for your own writing.

The chapters also feature activities designed to develop your understanding of the key knowledge covered and help you practise the required skills for assessment. Answers to many of the activities are available online. Scan the code or click here to access the answers as well as other resources.

Preparing for assessment with *English Language Year 12*

In Units 3 and 4 you can be assessed through any of the following assessment types, including combinations of them: a folio of annotated texts, an essay, an investigative report, an analytical commentary and short-answer questions. Your assessments can be written, oral or multimodal. Your teacher will decide which of these assessments are the most appropriate.

In this textbook, we consider each of the assessment types for every outcome. Chapter 18 explains in detail how to approach each assessment type, and you are encouraged to refer to it as needed throughout the year.

The two main types of writing required in English Language assessments are discussions about language use in Australia – which draws on your knowledge of linguistic concepts and contemporary linguistic debates – and analyses of language features in texts. You will likely write about the former in an essay response to a topic, and the latter when analysing specific texts.

Studying Year 12 English Language

While every student will develop their own approach to studying English Language, there are some key study methods that you can begin straightaway and continue throughout the year, to help set you up for success in your studies.

Learn the metalanguage

Studying English Language can feel overwhelming at first, as it might seem that there is a lot of metalanguage required. However, there are some simple revision methods you can use to help you understand and use metalanguage with confidence.

To learn the metalanguage, it can be helpful to create a glossary as you progress through the course, with definitions and annotated examples. Find examples from a range of different written and spoken text types with varying levels of formality. Set aside time each week to practise using the terms you have learned.

Tip

Quizlet and the StudyBlue app are useful tools for creating your own study resources to revise metalanguage. Scan the code on the left or click here to access Quizlet, and scan the code on the right or click here to download the StudyBlue app.

Pay attention to language use

While it is useful to sit and analyse a written or spoken text at home or in school, one benefit of undertaking English Language is that you can study anywhere. Listen to the radio, TV, podcasts or your own personal conversations, and think about how speakers use language to help achieve their intentions. Read signs, advertisements, newspapers, magazines and other forms of written texts and consider how the creator has maintained your interest, as well as the kinds of language features they have used to do this.

Keep a journal of language examples

One of the most helpful things you can do during your studies is to collect, annotate and analyse contemporary Australian examples of language, both written and spoken. Use a physical or digital journal throughout the year to keep a record of your examples, annotations and analyses, and aim to find examples of different text types from as many varied sources as you can. This can include public communications from the government, interviews and speeches, advertising, literature, news reports, social media and your own personal conversations. You will use your examples and analyses to demonstrate a precise use of metalanguage as well as your understanding of the key topics covered in each area of study.

Selina Dennis, Natalie Gleeson, Luke Francis and Anna Stewart

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CHAPTER
01

Preliminary knowledge by subsystem

This year you will use metalanguage that you learned in Units 1 and 2 of English Language as well as new metalanguage that you will need during your studies for Units 3 and 4.

This chapter will cover the core metalanguage that is new in Year 12 and shared across the areas of study – particularly Areas of Study 1 and 2 in Unit 3. You should familiarise yourself with the metalanguage in this chapter before you begin your studies of Units 3 and 4. This chapter will also be a useful quick reference for refreshing your memory throughout your studies in Year 12.

Key knowledge covered:

- conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend and line numbers

Knowledge from Year 11 English Language

It is very important to make sure that you are well-versed in the metalanguage for both Year 11 and Year 12, as this will be treated as assumed knowledge for the rest of the book. You are encouraged to review the Year 11 metalanguage through the QR code below before you begin learning the new core metalanguage for Year 12.

Scan the code or click here to view the core metalanguage required from Units 1 and 2 of English Language.

The core metalanguage for Year 12 is listed on the following pages and is divided into the subsystems of language: phonetics and phonology, morphology, lexicology, syntax, discourse and pragmatics, and semantics.

One new aspect for Year 12 that you will learn is **subsystem patterning**. This simply refers to language patterns that appear in written and spoken texts, categorised by the subsystems. In this subject, the subsystems that have patterning are the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic subsystems.

Phonetics and phonology

Phonetics is the study of how we make speech sounds and how we organise these sounds. **Phonology** is the study of the patterns that speech sounds form within a language.

Phonological metalanguage you will need to know from Year 11 includes **connected speech processes, the IPA, the transcription of English using the IPA** and **prosodic features.**

Phonological patterning

Phonological patterning refers to a set of phonological language features in written and spoken texts. Each of the phonological patterns has a distinct effect on a written or spoken text that varies depending on its context. Phonological patterns may be used by speakers or writers for fun and to express creativity, or they may be used persuasively to capture and maintain the attention of an audience. There are many manipulations and combinations of phonological patterns in texts. You will need to consider carefully why an author might have created such an effect. Phonological patterning consists of **alliteration**, **assonance**, **consonance**, **onomatopoeia**, **rhythm** and **rhyme**.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of phonemes at the beginning of words in a phrase, clause or sentence.

Example

Those are pretty practical pants you're wearing.

Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of vowel phonemes across phrases, clauses or sentences.

Example

The fleet of jeeps drove through the streets.

Consonance

Consonance refers to the repetition of consonant phonemes, often at syllable-final boundaries.

Example

The bees in the trees buzzed with ease.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the process by which evocative words are created from the sounds they represent.

Example

The crow squawked loudly, causing a rustle in the bushes.

Rhythm

Rhythm is created when the intonation of a set of words is repeated across two or more phrases, clauses or sentences.

Example

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary. – Edgar Allen Poe

Rhyme

Rhyme refers to the repetition of similar phonemes at the ends of two or more words. This entails the direct manipulation of consonance and assonance in word-final syllables.

Example

The potato cake was fake.

Tip

You can use an acronym such as 'RACORA' when recalling phonological patterns – Rhythm, Alliteration, Consonance, Onomatopoeia, Rhyme, Assonance.

Morphology

Morphology is the study of words and their parts. Each word consists of one or more morphemes, which is the smallest unit of meaning within a word.

Morphological processes you will need to know from Year 11 are **word formation processes** (**affixation, abbreviation, shortening, compounding, blending, backformation, conversion of word class, initialism, acronym, contraction**). In Year 12, these are referred to as **morphological patterns**.

Lexicology

Lexicology is the study of the form, meaning and behaviour of words.

Lexicological metalanguage you will need to know from Year 11 includes **word classes** (**nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, interjections**) and **word formation processes** (**neologism, borrowings, commonisation, nominalisation**).

Syntax

Syntax is the study of how words are ordered in structures that communicate meaning – phrases, clauses and sentences.

Syntactic metalanguage you will need to know from Year 11 includes **phrases**, **clauses**, **sentences** and **word order**.

Active and passive voice

There are two types of voice in the English language: **active** and **passive**. In the active voice, the subject of a verb performs the action, while in the passive voice the subject of the verb receives the action.

Examples

Frida threw the basketball. (active voice)

The basketball was thrown by Frida. (passive voice)

The passive voice is more common in formal writing, and it can allow speakers and writers to avoid specifying the performer of the action (the agent). Passive constructs that omit the agent are known as **agentless passives**. Agentless passives can be useful in some circumstances as they reduce the responsibility of the agent or avoid giving unnecessary detail.

Examples

The train was delayed. (the reason for the train being delayed is not relevant)

The vase was broken. (the speaker avoids specifying who broke the vase)

Syntactic patterning

Syntactic patterning is often employed by authors to support a function or purpose, allowing them to create rhythmic and memorable pieces of texts. Syntactic patterns serve to draw readers' or listeners' attention to a component of a text in a way that reinforces meaning and understanding. Syntactic patterns consist of **parallelism**, **antithesis** and **listing**.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the repetition of grammatical structures two or more times in succession.

Example

work hard, stay focused (verb+adjective repeated structure)

Antithesis

Antithesis is the presentation of two contrasting ideas near one another in parallel structures. Antithesis is used to create a balance between opposing ideas and to emphasise this contrast. Antithetical phrases can use antonymy (use of opposites), irony, contrast in scale or other means to juxtapose the ideas.

Examples

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...' – Charles Dickens (antonymy creates contrast)

'That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.' – Neil Armstrong (contrasts scale of significance)

Listing

Listing is used to present a series of related ideas, items or elements, usually in a similar grammatical form. Words, phrases or clauses in a list are often introduced by a colon and are separated by commas or semicolons (for longer items or those already containing commas).

Lists can provide clarity by separating elements into a simple format, to create a rhythm in language and to emphasise a point or build an argument.

Examples

I need to buy pies, cakes, hot dogs and sausage rolls. (enhances clarity)

There are three reasons why this policy should be implemented: reducing costs, increasing efficiency and improving morale. (places emphasis on each reason to support an argument or explanation)

The room was filled with objects of all sorts: old books with torn covers, vintage furniture coated in dust, faded photographs and a clock that had long ago stopped ticking. (creates rhythm in a narrative or descriptive text)

Tip

You can use the acronym ‘PAL’ when recalling syntactic patterns – Parallelism, Antithesis, Listing.

Discourse and pragmatics

Discourse refers to written or spoken texts that are longer than a sentence. **Pragmatics** is the study of how language is used within a given context, and how context contributes to meaning.

Discourse metalanguage you will need to know from Year 11 includes **paralinguistic features (vocal effects, non-verbal communication, creakiness, breathiness)**.

Textual cohesion

Cohesion refers to the way we use grammatical and lexical techniques to link words together to create meaning. It is important as it ensures that an audience can easily follow what is happening within a text. Cohesion can be created through **lexical choice**; **ellipsis**, **repetition** and **substitution**; **collocation**; **adverbials** and **conjunctions**; **information flow**; and **reference**.

Lexical choice

Lexical choice refers to the role of content words in creating texts: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. When writing for a purpose, selected words will relate to the topic or concept being discussed, creating cohesion. Lexical choices that are most relevant for creating a cohesive text are **synonymy**, **antonymy**, **hyponymy** and **hypernymy**.

Synonymy

Synonymy refers to using pairs or groups of words that are equivalent or very similar in meaning.

Example

choice, selection and preference. (all three words have a similar meaning so could be used within a text to create cohesion)

Antonymy

Antonymy is the relationship of words that are opposite in meaning. Antonymy unifies words even though they are opposite in meaning, as they can be easily contrasted and compared.

Example

He's always been hot and cold with me.

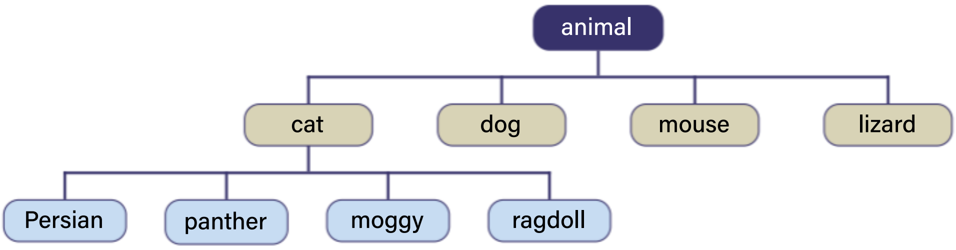
Hyponymy and hypernymy

A **hyponym** is a word that belongs to (is considered a subtype of) a larger category of terms, which is called a **hypernym**. A hypernym can have multiple hyponyms, and hyponyms can also be hypernyms.

Hyponyms and hypernyms help a writer or speaker avoid unnecessary repetition and create varied texts. The clear semantic links between the terms increase cohesion.

Example

Cat is a hyponym of the animal hypernym; and ragdoll is a hyponym of the cat hypernym.



Ellipsis, repetition and substitution

Deleting, repeating or substituting words and phrases can create cohesion.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is the omission of words or phrases, particularly when they are already known due to contextual information or because they have been referred to previously.

Example

Lauren first went to school then ~~Lauren went~~ home right after.

(the subject 'Lauren' and verb 'went' become known information, so they are omitted in the second clause)

Repetition

Repetition refers to using the same word throughout a text to reiterate an idea or topic. It can occur with exact duplication, or with inflectional modification.

Example

> Aleyna loved reading books. Without a doubt the appeal went beyond the stories within them, it was also the calming smell of the books' paper. She embraced being bookish.

Substitution

Substitution occurs when alternative words, phrases or clauses are used in place of the original. This helps to reduce unnecessary repetition.

Examples

> Jonas met Daniel Andrews. The former premier shook his hand.

Collocation

Collocation refers to words that typically appear next to or very near each other in texts. They strengthen cohesion by allowing readers or listeners to predict the next word in a sentence or utterance.

Example

> Do you like to drink strong or weak tea? ('strong' and 'weak' are highly collocated with the word 'tea' – we wouldn't expect to hear 'powerful tea' or 'light tea', because they are not often combined as whole phrases)

Adverbials and conjunctions

Adverbials and conjunctions can be used to improve the flow of writing by tying together phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs.

Adverbials

Adverbials are words, phrases or clauses that provide information, often in relation to time, place or manner. They can be used as signposts within a text.

Example

> Firstly, we will do a warm-up game, immediately followed by some morning tea, and finally finish with a Q&A.

Conjunctions

Coordinators join words, phrases and clauses together to allow for additions, comparisons and contrasts. Common coordinate conjunctions include 'and', 'or' and 'but'.

Example

> I like cats but Jamie likes dogs.

Subordinators place relationships between ideas in the context of time and space, or cause and effect. Common subordinate conjunctions include 'although', 'after' and 'because'.

Example

Naomi was sent outside because she had dirty shoes. ('because' indicates a cause-and-effect relationship between the two clauses)

Information flow

Information flow refers to how speakers convey meaning by organising and sequencing their language to effectively communicate with their intended audience. Information flow includes **front focus**, **clefting** and **end focus**. Some of the purposes of manipulating information flow are to emphasise important information, provide contextual information, create contrast, maintain interest and increase readability.

Front focus

Front focus occurs when a speaker or writer places new or important information at the initial or front part of a sentence.

In typical English sentences, we use SVO word order (**Subject**, **Verb**, **Object**) with **complements** and **adverbials** also usually occurring after the subject. When something appears before the subject, it's considered to have been placed in front focus.

Examples

I like to eat potato cakes. (no front focus)

Potato cakes I like. (front focus)

Clefting

Clefting refers to the modification of the syntax of a sentence to emphasise one particular element. This allows that element to become the focus of the sentence, helping to increase cohesion. There are two types of clefting: **it-clefting** and **wh-clefting**.

It-clefts always begin with 'it', directly followed by a conjugated form of the primary auxiliary 'to be'. The focus of the sentence follows, then the additional information completes the sentence in the form of a subordinate clause.

Examples

It is potato cakes that I like eating. (emphasising 'potato cakes')

It is eating potato cakes that I like. (emphasising 'eating potato cakes')

Wh-clefts begin with a relative pronoun, often a 'wh' word such as 'what' or 'who', or 'how', as part of a subordinate clause. This is followed by a conjugated form of the primary auxiliary 'to be' near the end of the sentence, finishing with the element in focus.

Examples

What I like eating is potato cakes. (emphasising 'potato cakes')

What I like is eating potato cakes. (emphasising 'eating potato cakes')

End focus

End focus occurs when speakers or writers place new or important information at the end of a sentence or clause. This delays the delivery of a main idea to give it prominence or create a sense of anticipation, surprise or resolution. In spoken texts, placing the most meaningful or important elements last means that this is the most recent piece of information an audience hears.

Examples

I went to the supermarket yesterday and bought some stuff: milk, eggs, bread and cheese. (the important information is at the end to create emphasis and be memorable)

The time to paint the house has come. ('has come' as a verb phrase has been moved after the prepositional phrase 'to paint the house', to give it prominence)

Reference

Reference occurs when we use an expression to refer to another word, phrase or clause (the **referent**) within a discourse or setting.

We look at reference in terms of **anaphoric reference**, **cataphoric reference** and **deictic reference**.

Anaphoric reference

Anaphoric reference is when an author or speaker refers to something previously mentioned in a conversation or written discourse. This can be achieved using pronouns or other referring expressions, such as possessive determiners. Anaphoric reference allows us to avoid repetition.

Example

I gave Pei her coat as she had left it behind. ('her': possessive determiner, anaphoric reference to the referent 'Pei'; 'she': personal pronoun, anaphoric reference to the referent 'Pei'; 'it': personal pronoun, anaphoric reference to the referent 'her coat')

Cataphoric reference

Cataphoric reference is when an author or speaker uses a pronoun or other referring expression to refer to something that will be mentioned later in the discourse. Cataphoric reference can build anticipation and set up expectations.

Example

He promised to help her, and Sailor never broke his promises to Harri. ('he': personal pronoun, cataphoric reference to 'Sailor'; 'her': personal pronoun, cataphoric reference to 'Harri')

Deictic reference

Deictic reference is an expression used in relation to the speaker, listener or context of the communication. These are elements that signal the people, places, objects, times or situations in which a discourse is occurring. Examples of deictic references are listed below.

Types	Examples
Pronouns and determiners	this, that, these, those
Personal pronouns	I, you, he, she, we, they
Spatial adverbs	here, there, above, below, near, far
Temporal adverbs	now, then, yesterday, today, tomorrow
Date/time expressions	Sunday, December, evening, noon, next week, last year
Adjectives	same, previous, next
Adverbs of manner	like this, like that, so, thus

Tip

For textual cohesion, a good memory aid is 'ECLAIR' – Ellipsis, repetition and substitution; Collocation; Lexical choice; Adverbials and conjunctions; Information flow; Reference. Think of an eclair as requiring the cohesion of pastry, cream and chocolate.

Textual coherence

Textual coherence is the logical and meaningful organisation of a text. It involves arranging ideas, information and the elements of a text in such a way that the sentences, paragraphs and sections create a clear message with smooth transitions. Coherence is integral as it allows an audience to understand what is being conveyed. We analyse texts for the following features of coherence: **cohesion**, **inference**, **logical ordering**, **formatting** and **consistency** and **conventions**.

Cohesion

A coherent text relies on a high level of unity: elements working together to form a whole. Each of the features of textual cohesion (discussed on pages 5–10) contribute to the coherence of a text.

Inference

Inference is the meaning that the audience makes when considering a text that contains information that is not overtly present. We draw inferences from the available information, context and our own reasoning, allowing us to draw conclusions beyond what is written. Meaning often relies on a cultural or social understanding of a particular context.

Examples

The road was wet, and there were tyre marks on the ground. (it is likely that a vehicle had skidded on the wet road, leaving tyre marks)

Gary looked at the empty cookie jar with a guilty expression. (it can be inferred that Gary ate the cookies from the cookie jar, as his guilty expression suggests he may have done something he wasn't supposed to do)

Logical ordering

Logical ordering occurs when we construct a text, as we arrange information in a way that will maximise understanding. We often do this subconsciously, but in planned texts it is an intentional process designed to increase audience understanding.

Common methods to logically order a text include chronological (ordering a text in relation to when events occurred in time), sequential (ordering information in a series of steps) and categorical ordering (ordering a text by topic).

Formatting

Formatting includes the font style, spacing, alignment, headings and subheadings, lists, text colours, graphics, margins and white space. Each of these visual features can help give prominence to more important elements of a text. For instance, large headings are read before smaller text and the connotations of colours can contribute to the meaning of a text.

Consistency and conventions

Consistency and **conventions** help to establish and maintain a sense of order, structure and unity in the content, aiding coherence.

Consistency

Consistency occurs when similar concepts or entities are referred to in the same way throughout the text, without unnecessary variations. Consistent formatting, as well as the use of consistent punctuation, capitalisation, font and spacing also contribute to the overall coherence of a text by providing visual cues to the reader and creating a unified presentation.

Conventions

Conventions are established rules and expectations for how certain types of texts are structured, organised or presented. They can include genre-specific structures, such as the way recipes or analytical essay responses are arranged, and field- or domain-specific writing norms, such as the standard citation styles you might use in your VCE studies. Adhering to established conventions in writing helps readers to follow the text, understand the intended meaning and engage with the content in a familiar and expected manner.

Tip

For textual coherence, a good memory aid is 'FLICC' – Formatting, Logical ordering, Inference, Cohesion, and Consistency and conventions.

Features of spoken discourse

Features of spoken discourse are used in order to achieve purposes in situational and cultural contexts. They include **openings**, **closings**, **adjacency pairs**, **minimal responses / backchannels**, **overlapping speech**, **discourse markers/particles** and **non-fluency features**.

Openings

Openings are the initial phase of a discourse where participants establish contact and introduce the topic or purpose. The contents of an opening sequence are specific to the context of a conversation. Openings not only establish contact between participants, but also help to create **rapport** (familiarity and solidarity between people) and set the stage for the forthcoming conversation. An opening can also signal the intended tenor of a conversation to all participants, helping to meet face needs and establish an appropriate register. Typical openings include the following.

→ See page 22 to learn about face needs.

Examples

I'm Phoebe ...

Hi!

Sorry to bother ...

I don't suppose you've got time for a quick question?

Welcome everyone!

You look fantastic.

smiles, hugs and handshakes

Closings

Closings occur in the final phase of discourse, where participants wrap up the interaction, exchange finishing remarks and signal the end of the exchange. They provide a clear end point to a conversation, allowing participants to reflect on the discussion and potentially leave with a sense of satisfaction or resolution. They also give an opportunity to express appreciation, gratitude or good wishes to other participants. This helps maintain social norms and demonstrates politeness and respect.

Examples

Well, time to go. Take care!
Bye!
Have a safe journey.
See you on Monday.
Thanks very much for coming.
It has been so nice to see you.
smiles, hugs and waves

Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pairs are sequentially linked utterances or turns in a conversation where one speech act (e.g. a question) is followed by its expected response (e.g. an answer). These sequences are normally adjacent to each other – one after the other – in a cooperative conversation.

Most adjacency pair sequences have what is referred to as **preferred** or **dispreferred** responses. The preferred response is the one expected by the initiator of the sequence. The dispreferred is the response that is not expected. An invitation, for example, has the preferred response of an acceptance. Another valid response, however, is a rejection of the invitation, which is dispreferred.

Tip

When dispreferred responses are used, they are typically longer sequences than preferred responses in order to mitigate any face-threatening act that the rejection will cause. This often involves prefacing the rejection, providing explanations or apologies, and sometimes offering alternative options.

→ See page 22 to learn about face-threatening acts.

Some common adjacency pair types are listed below and on the following page.

Examples

A: Do you have any potato cakes left? (question)
B: Yes, we still have some potato cakes available. (answer)

A: Hey, how ya going? (greeting)
B: Yo! Good, good. How about you? (greeting)
(Note: The response of ‘B’ also includes an initiation of a question–answer adjacency pair sequence.)

A: Skye, can you grab me a coffee while you’re at the cafe? (request)
B: Sure thing! I’ll get you one on my way back. (compliance – preferred)
B: I’m so sorry, I have tons to get and not enough hands! (rejection – dispreferred)

A: I'm sorry for the delay in responding to your email; it was an oversight on my part. (apology)

B: No worries. I understand. (acceptance – preferred)

B: Sorry is just not good enough: you've lost me an important client! (rejection – dispreferred)

A: May I assist you? (offer)

B: That would be greatly appreciated! (acceptance – preferred)

B: No thank you, I'm just looking. (rejection – dispreferred)

A: I think the new movie is one of the best I've seen in years. (assertion)

B: I completely agree! (agreement – preferred)

B: Really? I thought it was just okay. (disagreement – dispreferred)

A: Ibrahim, could you explain what this software is for? (clarification-seek)

B: Sure, it helps you organise your tasks and schedule. (clarification-provision – preferred)

B: Sorry, I don't have the time. (rejection – dispreferred)

A: Alright, catch you later. (farewell)

B: See ya, take care. (farewell – preferred)

B: Oh wait, I forgot to tell you something! (rejection – dispreferred)

A: I heard that there's going to be a surprise party for Noah next week. (information)

B: Totally, I'm so excited! (acknowledgement)

B: Hmm, I haven't heard anything about it. (denial – dispreferred)

A: Your presentation was excellent, Myko. You really know your stuff! (compliment)

B: Thank you! It took a lot of time to prepare. (thanks – preferred)

B: Thanks, but I think there's still room for improvement. (thanks/mild rejection – preferred)

B: Oh my gosh it was awful, I felt like such an imposter! (rejection – dispreferred)

(Note: In Australian society, politeness often dictates that a mild rejection of a compliment is an expected second element of a preferred response.)

Minimal responses / backchannels

Minimal responses, also known as backchannels, are brief replies in a conversation that acknowledge and encourage another speaker, and may provide opinions on the topic, without providing significant additional information or indicating intention to take the floor. They help maintain conversational flow and indicate understanding, engagement, support or agreement. They may consist of vocalisations, words, phrases or non-verbal cues such as nodding, smiling or frowning.

Examples

Right (single word)
I see (short phrase)
mm-hmm (brief vocalisation)

Minimal responses provide continuous feedback, indicating that a listener is actively engaged and following along. They help to establish rapport, encourage the speaker to continue and create a smooth and cooperative flow of conversation.

Overlapping speech

Overlapping speech is the situation in which two or more participants in a conversation speak simultaneously. Overlapping speech can be either **cooperative** or **uncooperative**, depending on the context and the intentions of the participants involved. Overlapping speech is indicated in transcripts through the square brackets symbol.

→ See page 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

The overlap is cooperative when participants engage in simultaneous speech that demonstrates mutual understanding or support. It's often used to show agreement or build the conversation.

Example

A: I really enjoyed eating those pancakes last night,
[they were delicious.]
B: [oh my gosh they] were soooo good.

An overlap is uncooperative when participants speak over each other without regard for the ongoing conversation. It can disrupt the flow of communication, hinder understanding or show disregard. If frequent, this type of overlap signals a hostile relationship between participants.

Example

A: I really think we should go to Mem's party [tonight.]
B: [No abso]lutely not.
I told you why before\
stop trying to guilt trip me into going.

Discourse markers/particles

Discourse particles, also known as discourse markers, are linguistic elements that do not carry any semantic meaning on their own, but play a role in organising communication, managing interactions and indicating speaker intention.

Common discourse particles and their purposes are shown in the table below.

Discourse particle	Purpose	Example
Well	Indicates that the speaker is about to make a comment or response, often one that may be unexpected or unwelcome. Can also be used to express doubt or an opposing viewpoint.	Well, I think that's not entirely true.
You know	Checks that the listener is following along or emphasises a point.	It's, you know, not as easy as it seems.
Like	Gives an example, or indicates approximation or uncertainty.	It was like a hundred degrees in there.
Anyway	Changes the topic or loops back to a previous topic. Can also indicate the continuation of a narrative.	Anyway, as I was saying earlier …
So	Introduces a conclusion or a result.	So, I decided to take the job.
I mean	Clarifies or elaborates on a previous statement, or expresses a personal opinion.	I mean, it's not that I don't like it, it's just too expensive.
Right	Checks for understanding or agreement, or indicates that the speaker is about to move on to a new point.	Right, so the next item on the agenda is …

Non-fluency features

Non-fluency features are aspects of discourse that reduce its cohesion. These features include **pauses**, **filled pauses / voiced hesitations**, **false starts**, **repetition** and **repairs**.

Pauses

Pauses are brief intervals of silence during speech. Non-fluent pauses can occur for various reasons, such as the speaker gathering thoughts, indicating hesitation or signalling a shift in topic. In a transcript, they are indicated by round brackets and full stops, with longer pauses indicated with more full stops.

→ See pages 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

Example

I went (.) to (.) the principal's office.

Filled pauses / voiced hesitations

Filled pauses or voiced hesitations are instances where speakers use vocalisations such as 'uh', 'um' or 'er' to fill the silence in their speech. They are also known as voiced fillers. They often indicate hesitation, uncertainty or a momentary struggle to find the right words and are commonly used to hold the floor during a conversation.

Example

Uh, I spent, um, all of my money?

False starts

False starts are when speakers begin an utterance but then interrupt themselves and start again. This interruption can occur mid-word, mid-phrase or mid-clause. They occur due to self-correction, uncertainty or the need to rephrase for clarity.

Example

So I ju-I mean I only left for ten-I mean twenty minutes.

Repetition

Repetition is the unintentional restating of words, phrases or clauses within a speech due to hesitations, self-correction or difficulty in finding the right words to say.

Example

I'm not late! I'm just I'm just (.) fashionably delayed.

Tip

Be careful when referring to repetition in a transcript – it could be a non-fluency feature but it could also be an intentional language feature employed by a speaker or author for emphasis or clarification.

Repairs

Repairs are instances where speakers correct or revise their previous utterances. This may occur due to errors, miscommunication or the need for clarification. Repairs can happen through various strategies, such as self-correction or seeking confirmation.

Example

I have, I mean had, enough money.

Repair sequences can be prompted by other speakers, too. This creates an adjacency pair sequence.

Example

A: I ate eight potato cakes last night.
B: Sorry, you ate what? (repair: information sought)
A: Haha I had eight potato cakes. (information provided)

→ How speakers manage repairs is covered in detail later in this chapter (see pages 19–20).

Strategies in spoken discourse

Strategies in spoken discourse help speakers to achieve successful communication and create a harmonious social environment. The strategic use of discourse features, coupled with other linguistic features, can help to achieve what the speaker intends within a speech act. Spoken discourse strategies include **topic management**, **turn-taking**, **management of repair sequences** and **code switching**.

Topic management

Topic management refers to the methods speakers use to manage a topic within a conversation or monologue. Topic management can include the following strategies.

Strategy	Explanation
Initiation	Introducing a new topic in a conversation. It can be explicit with a direct statement or question, or implicit with hints or cues that introduce the topic.
Development	The progression or elaboration of a topic within a conversation. It involves expanding upon the initial discussion by providing more details, examples or explanations related to the topic.
Shift	Where the conversation moves from one topic to another, and there is a coherent link between the two.
Change	The transition from one topic to a different topic during a conversation. It can occur naturally as participants move from one point to another or it can be a deliberate change to a different subject.
Loop	Revisiting or returning to a previously discussed topic in a conversation. It involves resurfacing a subject that has previously been mentioned but not fully explored or resolved.
Termination	The closure of a topic within a conversation, occurring when participants reach a natural end point of the conversation.

When discussing topic management, we sometimes refer to the concept of ‘the floor’, with the idea that whoever has ‘the floor’ is having their turn in the conversation. ‘Taking the floor’ refers to getting your turn in a conversation; ‘holding the floor’ would mean maintaining your turn through strategies such as pause fillers; and ‘passing the floor’ refers to offering someone else a turn, perhaps by asking them a question.

Turn-taking

Turn-taking refers to the methods by which speakers alternate turns when talking. In most conversations, at any given moment, one person speaks while others listen, and then another person takes their turn to speak. This practice prevents people from talking over each other and helps maintain the flow of conversation.

Turn-taking typically involves the following guidelines.

Guideline	Explanation
Change speakers regularly	One of the most basic rules of conversation is that turns regularly pass from one participant to another.
Speak one at a time	Most of the time, only one person speaks at a time in a conversation. Although there are exceptions, this is a common trend across various cultures.
Be orderly	Turn-taking is not random. The current speaker can select the next speaker (e.g. by using an interrogative in a question–answer adjacency pair), or another participant can self-select to be the next speaker.
Take turns of any length	The 'turn' does not have to be a certain length. It can be a word, a phrase, a sentence or a whole monologue.
Provide cues and feedback	Speakers use various cues to signal the end of a turn, such as falling intonation, slowing speech and syntactic completion. Listeners can use backchanneling to show they're paying attention and indicate that they're not yet ready to take a turn.
Signal problems	If there's a problem with turn-taking (such as overlap occurring), participants will usually try to 'repair' the conversation by deciding who should continue speaking.

Management of repair sequences

Repair management refers to the processes by which speakers identify and correct communication problems in spoken discourse, to ensure smooth and continuous conversation. These problems could be related to pronunciation, grammar, word choice or misunderstanding.

Repairs can be considered in terms of who makes the utterance requiring repair, who initiates the repair sequence and who performs the repair. The following categories are those used by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) to categorise repair sequences.

Repair sequence type	Definition	Example
Self-initiated self repair	The speaker realises their own mistake and corrects it immediately without intervention from the listener. This is the most common method of managing repairs.	Student: I got 68% on that test – oops, I mean 78%.
Self-initiated other repair	The speaker notices their own mistake and invites the listener to correct it. This indicates a cooperative speech exchange as well as familiarity or rapport with the listener.	Student: What score did I get again? Parent: I think 78%.

➜

Repair sequence type	Definition	Example
Other-initiated self repair	The listener indicates a problem and the speaker makes the correction. This indicates a cooperative speech exchange and familiarity or rapport with the listener; however, it can be face-threatening in some settings and contexts. See page 22 to learn about face-threatening acts.	Parent: Did you say you got 68% on that test? Student: No, I meant to say 78%.
Other-initated other repair	The listener indicates a problem and provides the correction. It may cause offence if not appropriate to the context. Successful correction that does not cause offence can indicate familiarity or rapport with the listener.	Parent: You didn't get 68% on that test, silly, you got 78%.

Code switching

Code switching is when a speaker switches between two or more languages in a single interaction or text. Code switching can be done for many purposes, including to demonstrate group membership and belonging, to reflect a shared cultural/linguistic background, or to increase social bonds and solidarity.

Example

Have you been down to the *ekklesia* lately? I reckon the Easter celebrations this year are gonna be awesome! (the speaker has switched from English to Greek – *ekklesia* translates to 'church' – and then back to English)

Politeness strategies

Politeness refers to the language choices that show consideration, respect and sensitivity towards others, and an awareness of social communication expectations and norms. Politeness markers such as 'thanks', 'please' and 'sorry' are commonly used in everyday conversations. The politeness strategies that people employ may vary depending on contextual or social factors, such as the degree of **social distance** between the participants (the closeness of their relationship); however, they are most commonly used to build rapport.

In English Language, we focus on **positive** and **negative politeness**.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness refers to the strategies we use to create and maintain **social harmony** by demonstrating empathy and building rapport. Rapport can be reflected through language that shows friendliness, solidarity, interest and inclusiveness.

See pages 68–9 to learn more about social harmony and building rapport.

Some of the key features of positive politeness are outlined in the table below.

Feature	Description	Examples
Emphasising similarity	Highlighting shared characteristics, interests or values to create camaraderie.	'Oh, I love chai lattes too!' 'We go to the same dance school.'
Showing interest	Expressing interest in the audience's opinions, experiences or emotions through asking questions, listening attentively and responding empathetically.	'What subjects are you doing next year?' 'How was the concert you went to? I'm so keen to know.'
Using humour	Making jokes, witty remarks and lighthearted banter to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.	'Will you be here soon or shall I send out a search party?' 'I'm no polar bear, but I can try and break the ice.'
Offering compliments	Complimenting the audience's appearance, achievements or abilities to boost their self-esteem.	'You're so good at karaoke.' 'I really enjoyed your presentation.'
Using inclusive language	Using personal inclusive pronouns – 'we', 'our' and 'us' – to create a sense of belonging and establish common ground.	'We started working here at the same time.' 'It is our responsibility to get this project done.'

Negative politeness

Negative politeness focuses on reducing the imposition placed on the listener. This is achieved by indirectness, showing deference and demonstrating respect for the listener's autonomy. Negative politeness is used when the intent is to maintain social harmony or when there is a perceived social distance between participants.

Some of the key mitigating strategies of negative politeness are outlined in the table below.

Feature	Description	Examples
Hedging	Using tentative language to avoid imposing on the listener's autonomy, particularly when making requests or challenging their opinions.	'Could you maybe do it like this instead?' 'I think it's kind of different in the way that I read what the author's saying.'
Being indirect and ambiguous	Using indirect or vague language, such as hints or euphemisms, to convey a message indirectly. This leaves the listener to infer the intended meaning.	'Is that the time?' 'I'd love to come but I'm a bit under the weather.'
Using low modality verbs	Including modal auxiliaries in interrogatives that indicate possibility or uncertainty, to make requests in a less imposing manner.	'Could you pick up some milk on the way home?' 'Would it be possible to come in early tomorrow?'

Feature	Description	Examples
Apologising	Making apologies to show deference and acknowledge potential imposition on the listener.	'I'm sorry to bother you.' 'I apologise for the inconvenience.'
Applying other mitigating strategies	Using language to soften the impact or tone of what is being said, such as when making a request or giving feedback. Some common examples of mitigating strategies include: using polite expressions, tag questions and disclaimers; downplaying; using terms of address; or other respectful language to address the listener or refer to their position or status.	'With all due respect, don't you think this movie is terrible?' 'Correct me if I'm wrong, but don't the dry ingredients go in the mixture first?'

Face

The term 'face' is used to describe the aspect of the listener that is being acknowledged through the use of politeness strategies. It can be divided into **positive face** and **negative face**.

Positive face	The desire to be seen as competent and liked by others. It reflects an individual's need for social recognition, appreciation and inclusion. Concerns the desire for favourable social interactions and maintaining a positive self-image.
Negative face	The desire to be free from imposition and constraints on autonomy. It reflects an individual's need for independence, privacy and freedom to act. Concerns the desire to maintain one's sense of individuality and personal space.

When we use politeness strategies, we are usually attending to the **face needs** of the listener, mitigating threats to their positive or negative face. These threats are referred to as **face-threatening acts**, and if appropriate levels of politeness are not used, offence and discord may be created.

Face-threatening acts

A face-threatening act is communication that may pose a threat (potential harm) to an individual's positive or negative face, leading to consequences such as embarrassment, loss of face, offence or conflict. Examples of face-threatening acts include making requests, giving directives, complaining, disagreeing, interrupting and delivering bad news.

Examples

You're just not good at this. (threatens positive face, implying incompetence)

How much money do you make? (threatens negative face, invading privacy)

Politeness strategies are used to mitigate face-threatening effects and maintain rapport, harmony and politeness.

Examples

I can see you've put a lot of effort in. You'll get the hang of it soon! (positive politeness, mitigates threat to ability)

Would you be comfortable sharing your salary? I understand if you'd rather not. (negative politeness, mitigates threat to privacy)

Semantics

Semantics is the study of understanding and meaning-making when we consider words, phrases, sentences and texts. It considers both logical and lexical (dictionary) meanings.

Semantic metalanguage you will need to know from Year 11 includes **the relation of meaning and sign, semantic domain** and **inference.**

Semantic patterning

Semantic patterning involves the organisation and arrangement of meanings or semantic concepts within a text. This can be used to aid with cohesion and coherence, and to capture and maintain the attention of specific audiences. When texts are analysed for semantic patterning, it is relevant to consider **figurative language**, **irony**, **metaphor**, **oxymoron**, **simile**, **hyperbole**, **personification**, **animation**, **lexical ambiguity** and **puns**.

Figurative language

Figurative language includes words or expressions that deviate from their literal or ordinary meanings to create a more vivid or expressive effect. Figurative language is an umbrella term that consists of many other semantic patterns. For the purposes of this study, the semantic patterns listed below and on pages 24–5 are considered types of figurative language.

Irony

Irony occurs when a speaker or writer states one thing but means another, typically the opposite of what they have stated. This can be achieved via sarcasm, understatement or backhanded compliments.

Examples

Oh, great. Another SAC. Just what I needed. (sarcasm)

We experienced a slight setback. (understatement, when used to refer to a calamity)

Your achievements are impressive for someone with your background. (backhanded compliment)

Metaphor

A metaphor uses one semantic domain to help explain another semantic domain.

Examples

Love is a battlefield. (makes a comparison to suggest love can be challenging)

In life, we sprint towards our goals, leap over hurdles and endure the twists and turns of the track, knowing that we are just one step closer to the finish line that is our dreams. (extended metaphor likening life to a race, to illustrate the pursuit of personal fulfilment)

Oxymoron

An oxymoron is created when contradictory words or phrases are used in combination to create a contrasting effect. The juxtaposition of contradictory elements can evoke irony, humour or emphasise a paradoxical situation.

Examples:

bittersweet

virtual reality

Simile

A simile compares elements using ‘like’ or ‘as’ to highlight their similarities.

Example

She slept like a baby.

In Australian society, idiomatic similes are often used for humorous effect.

Example

As useful as an ashtray on a motorbike. (‘not very useful’)

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves exaggerated statements or claims that are not meant to be taken literally.

Example

If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times.

Personification

Personification is a pattern that attributes human qualities, characteristics or actions to non-human entities or inanimate objects.

Example

The old house groaned under the weight of its history. (the house gains the human ability to groan, conveying a sense of weariness)

Animation

Animation is the technique of bringing inanimate objects or fictional characters to life through language based around motion and expression.

Example

The words danced off the page and leaped into my imagination.

Lexical ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity refers to the existence of two or more possible meanings within a single word. Lexical ambiguity can also be known as semantic ambiguity. When used intentionally, lexical ambiguity can add layers of meaning to a text, evoke emotion or produce a comedic effect (as in the case of puns: see below). Its unintended use can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations and cause repair sequences to be initiated within conversational exchanges.

Examples:

She visits the bank regularly. (financial bank, or river bank?)

Parking fine. (okay to park, or parking penalty?)

Parking fine

Puns

Puns are a form of lexical ambiguity that exploits multiple meanings for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. These plays on words rely heavily on phonological, orthographical (relating to writing conventions) or semantic similarities.

Example

I used to ride my bike every day but had to stop. It made me too tired. (given the vowel similarities between ‘two’ and ‘too’, and ‘tyred’ and ‘tired’, the bicycle can be interpreted to have made the person feel they became ‘two tyred’ themselves)

Tip

You can use the phrase ‘PALM OF SHIP’ when recalling semantic patterns – Puns, Animation, Lexical ambiguity, Metaphor, Oxymoron, Figurative language, Simile, Hyperbole, Irony and Personification.

Other semantic features

Other semantic features can contribute to creating meaning and understanding within a text. These features include **semantic domain**, **idiom**, **denotation**, **connotation**, **euphemism** and **dysphemism**.

Semantic domain

Semantic domain is the grouping of words based on shared or related meanings.

Example

cupcake, knead, stir, stand mixer, icing and macaron. (all belong to the semantic domain of 'baking')

Idiom

Idioms are commonly used phrases which have a non-literal meaning. These may be integrated within a language, or more specific to individual social groups.

Example

Her blood is worth bottling. (the individual is very special)

Denotation

Denotation is the literal meaning of a word, as found in the dictionary.

Example

home: a place that someone lives in.

Connotation

Connotation is the set of associations and values that are attributed to a word over time.

Example

home: a place of safety, warmth and comfort.

Euphemism

Euphemisms are words or phrases that are used in place of a particularly blunt or taboo word or phrase, to reduce the impact of the statement.

Example

'Pass away' instead of 'die'.

Dysphemism

Dysphemisms are words or phrases that are used to magnify a particularly blunt or taboo word or phrase, to increase the impact of the statement.

Example

'Worm food' instead of 'dead'.

Transcript conventions for spoken English

In English Language, spoken texts are often transcribed into written form. In this process, transcription symbols are used to ensure the prosodic features used by the speakers are preserved. The common symbols that are used to transcribe spoken texts throughout this book and within VCE English Language can be found below.

Transcription key:

<A A>	allegro, fast-paced utterance
<L L>	lento, slow-paced utterance
_____	emphasis
-	truncated word
(.)	short pause
(..)	medium pause
(...)	long pause
/	rising pitch
\	falling pitch
↑↑	high pitch
↓↓	low pitch
[ ]	overlapping speech
=	elongation of sound
action	speaker action or gesture
,	continuing intonation
.	final intonation
?	questioning intonation
@@@	laughter
<F F>	forte, loud
<FF FF>	fortissimo, very loud
<P P>	piano, soft
<PP PP>	pianissimo, very soft
<RH RH>	rhythmic
<CRE CRE>	crescendo, increasingly louder
<DIM DIM>	diminuendo, increasingly softer

IPA and IPA transcription conventions

In Units 3 and 4 of English Language, the use of the IPA is optional, and you may choose to utilise it where you feel necessary. It may be appropriate to use when discussing Australian Englishes, for example. Scan the code or click here for an overview of the IPA and the transcription of English as described by Harrington, Cox and Evans (1997).

UNIT
3
Language variation and purpose

In English Language Unit 3, we explore how language is used for a variety of different purposes within contemporary Australian settings, in both formal and informal contexts. We examine the influence of register, tenor and audience on how we use language to communicate, and investigate how these influences operate to convey information and reflect values and attitudes.

In this unit, you will learn how to identify the main purposes and intents of authors when constructing texts, as well as how to analyse levels of formality and their influence on an audience. You will also develop your ability to write about formal and informal texts in a critical and analytical way.

CHAPTER

02 Language, formality, influences and functions

Throughout Unit 3, you will need to consider how we vary our language to suit different contexts and achieve different purposes. This chapter will take you through some of the fundamental factors that influence our construction of language, including levels of formality; language standards; register, tenor and audience; and the major functions of language. Understanding these concepts will help you with every text you approach, regardless of what kind of text it is.

Key knowledge covered:

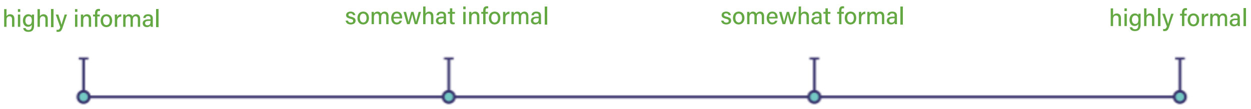
- the role of Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in informal texts
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in formal texts
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Standard English	The variety of English that a community has determined to represent that community's established variety of written and spoken English, and is formally codified in dictionaries and other official language resources.
Functions of language	The purpose of a message. Language has six functions: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic and poetic.
Register	Stylistic variation of language, defined by its use. It involves all features of language as well as levels of formality.
Tenor	The relationships between the participants of a communicative exchange.
Audience	The intended listener/s to or reader/s of a text.

Levels of formality

The level of formality of a text refers to how formal or informal the language used is. Formality can be considered as a continuum; there are varying degrees of formality, rather than a black-and-white distinction between formal and informal language. This allows for nuanced expression that can be tailored to specific situations.



The level of formality in language can be created through the use of certain features that are typical of either informal or formal texts. **Swearing**, **slang** and the use of **colloquial language**, for example, can increase the informality of a text, while the use of **jargon**, **euphemism** and **double speak** can increase the formality of a text. You will study the features of informal and formal texts in depth in Areas of Study 1 and 2, respectively.

→ See Chapter 3 to read about informal language features.

→ See Chapter 7 to read about formal language features.

The level of formality of a text is highly dependent on the situational and cultural context, the intent of the author or speaker, and the audience.

A business meeting, a casual conversation with a friend, an academic paper and a social media post each require different levels of formality. In these various situations, the language would be adapted to suit the demands of the specific context. Different cultures or social groups may also have varying expectations regarding formality in language. What is considered formal in one group may differ in another, and these cultural norms play a role in shaping the language used.

Understanding the intended audience of a text is key to selecting the appropriate level of formality. Speaking to a group of academics may require specialised terminology and a more formal register, while communicating with children or close friends calls for simpler, more casual language.

The purpose of a text also influences the level of formality. Whether the intent of the author is to persuade, instruct, entertain or inform, each requires different language styles. Individuals can vary their level of formality within a single conversation to achieve a particular purpose, reflecting the fluid nature of the formality continuum.

Standard English

Standard English is the form of English that is considered the accepted standard. It is not necessarily linked to any type of register or any particular level of formality. Its level of formality can be thought of as neutral – neither formal nor informal.

Tip

Some informal language features can frequently be accepted as part of Standard English, so when you are analysing a text in Year 12 make sure you don't confuse formality with adherence to the standards.

Standard English is used to create a common ground for understanding, ensuring that messages are conveyed accurately and effectively. There are different varieties of Standard English – for example, Standard American English, Standard British English and Standard Australian English – which all have slight variations in language use and norms that have been codified and standardised. Through its use, speakers and writers reflect the customs and values of a society.

Standard English is the variety taught in schools, used in formal writing and often expected in formal communication. The teaching of Standard English in educational institutions makes it a foundational aspect of literacy and learning. Standard English also enhances opportunities in global communication and professional fields as it makes texts accessible to wider audiences and assists in the creation of clear and effective communication.

Influences of language

Language is shaped and influenced by various factors that guide how we communicate in different contexts. Three important factors are **register**, **tenor** and **audience**.

Register

When we speak or write, we alter our language to suit the situation in which we find ourselves. Analysing the register of a text involves describing how a speaker or writer is using language based on a particular context. Common registers include formal, informal, technical, public, ceremonial and colloquial.

The table on the following page lists some of the elements you should consider when analysing register.

Language aspect	Features
Lexical choices	jargon idioms colloquialisms slang personal and impersonal pronouns morphological patterns hypocoristic use of suffixes emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes euphemisms and dysphemisms non-discriminatory language
Syntax	sentence structures completion of phrases and clauses active and passive voice word order ellipses
Pronunciation	elision assimilation vowel reduction insertion phonological patterns

Tenor

The tenor of a text refers to how the relationships between the participants can be reflected in the features of language that they use. When communicating with others, whether written or spoken, the roles the participants play can sometimes be more important than the situational or cultural context. Language features that support a determination of relationship type, and thus the tenor of a text, often link to formality and register.

Social status, professional roles, personal relationships and social distance are some of the elements you should consider when analysing the tenor of a text.

Relationship type	Explanation
Social status	The status of each participant within the situational or cultural context should be carefully considered. A teacher has a higher social status than a student when in a school setting because the teacher is in a position of authority, but this same teacher will not have the same higher status among their friends outside of that setting. This means the language the teacher uses in a classroom could be quite different from the language they use when out in the community.

Professional roles	Expertise, academic background and occupational status all play a role in shaping the language that we use. In a professional setting, the tenor often involves hierarchical relationships, such as employer–employee or client–service provider.
Personal relationships	Personal relationships that participants have with each other can shape how conversational exchanges occur. In family settings, particularly between parents and children, the tenor can be one of guidance and dependency. In a friendship group, tenor can be characterised by mutual respect, familiarity and equality.
Social distance	Social distance is how we refer to the abstract or conceptual space that we have between individuals or groups depending on who we are, who they are, and the situational or cultural context. Close friends would have little social distance while strangers would have more, and social hierarchies can further increase social distance.

Audience

When constructing texts, writers and speakers usually keep in mind their intended audience. Whether a text is spontaneous or planned, the register that writers or speakers use and the tenor they want to achieve are closely bound to the audience. A speaker or writer with a familiar audience is more likely to use an informal register, to promote and maintain rapport. For unfamiliar audiences, a more formal register would be employed to ensure inclusivity.

Many texts have multiple audiences, and it is important to consider this when you analyse a text. A televised speech, for example, often has a physical audience in front of the speaker, but also a wider audience watching the broadcast. A newsletter published by a school is likely to have multiple audiences such as staff, students, parents and guardians, and the wider school community. Being mindful of a text's multiple audiences will impact the register a writer or speaker chooses to employ.

When describing an audience, it is best to be as specific as possible. Avoid vague statements such as, 'The intended audience is everyone who reads/listens to the text'. You must also consider the situational and cultural context in which the text occurs when considering the listeners or readers.

Major functions of language

Authors and speakers create texts with the intent of achieving something. Whether it be to persuade, direct action, present opinions, provide facts or simply to convey emotions, the language that we use has an underlying function.

For the purposes of VCE English Language, the major functions of spoken and written texts are **referential**, **emotive**, **conative**, **phatic**, **metalinguistic** and **poetic**, as outlined by Russian-American linguist Roman Jakobson. These categories are not mutually exclusive and many texts will have more than one function.

Function	Explanation
Referential	Describes language users sharing information with their intended audience. This information may or may not be true, but the message is presented as being factual and objective.
Emotive	Allows users to express emotions and desires. It's sometimes referred to as the expressive function. This function is usually about the addresser and their presentation of emotion – real or not.
Conative	Involves directions, questions and commands. Messages with a conative function aim to cause the audience to react in some way.
Phatic	Creates and maintains social connections between the writer or speaker and their audience. These messages tend to be somewhat meaningless outside a social context.
Metalinguistic	Describes language itself. It is the language used to talk about language, such as when metalanguage is used. The metalinguistic function allows speakers to check whether they have been understood or are using the right type of language for the conversation.
Poetic	Focuses on the message itself, rather than on the communicators. It is sometimes referred to as the aesthetic function because these texts are created with consideration of the beauty or wit of the words within them.

Tip

When a text has more than one function, you should acknowledge the functions that are most prominent in the text.

Writing about language and purpose

In Unit 3, you will analyse a variety of informal and formal texts, both written and spoken, across a range of different text types.

To help you develop your analytical and writing skills, worked examples are included throughout this book. Worked examples in Unit 3 that analyse a particular text identify the informal or formal language features, relate these to the purpose of the text and explain the effect of the language. You will learn about informal and formal language features in Chapters 3 and 7, and about purposes for informal and formal language in Chapters 4 and 8. Every text is different, so you will see that the analyses come to different conclusions for each text. Some worked examples identify features through annotations, while others demonstrate a written analysis of a text.

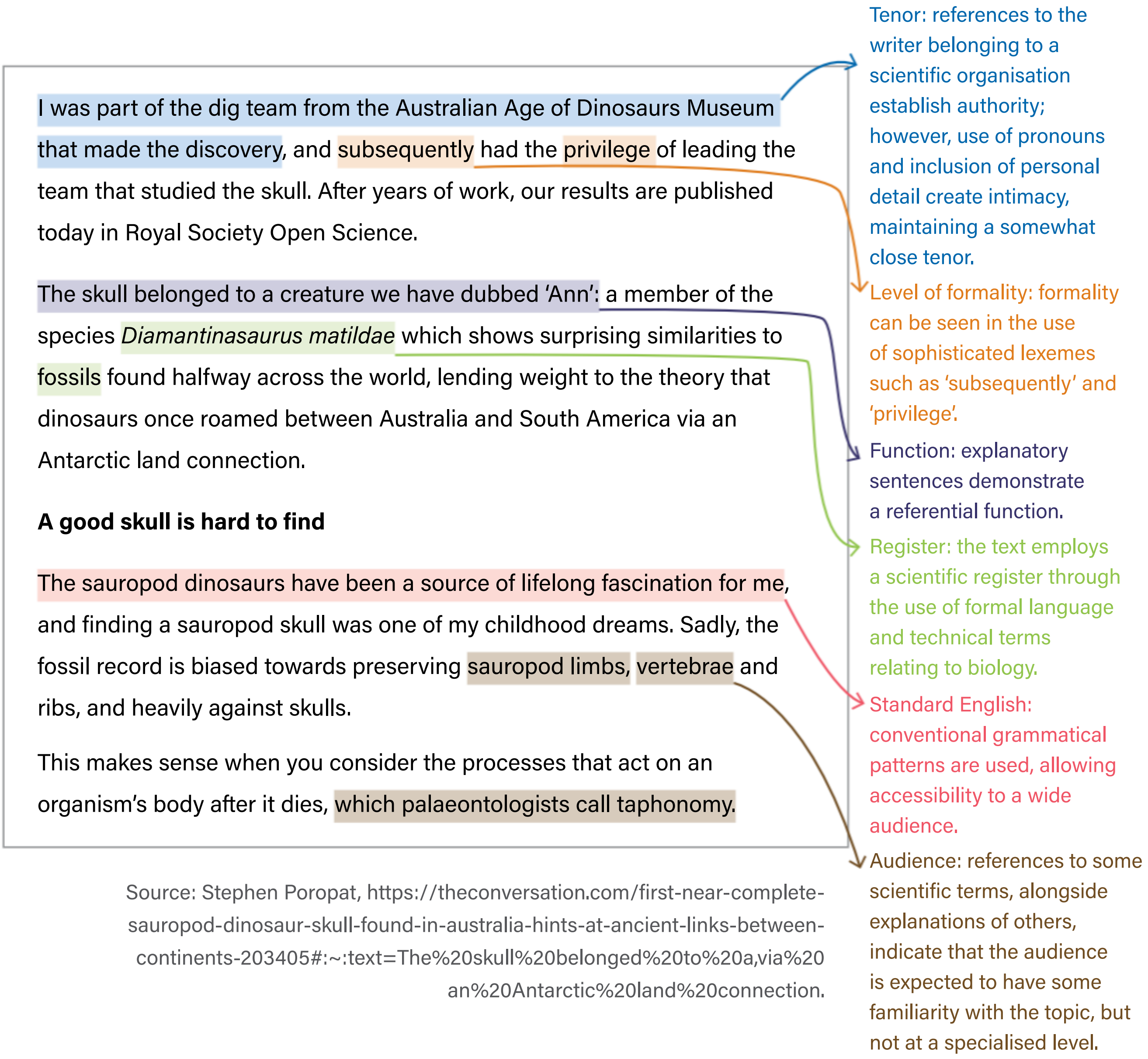
When writing analytically about language and purpose, one method you could use is to carry out the following steps.

- Step 1 Describe the language feature of informal or formal language, using metalanguage.
- Step 2 Include the example from the text with a line number.
- Step 3 Explain how the example relates to the language feature and the text's purpose.

To prepare for writing essays, it can be helpful to pay attention to any areas of contention, such as attitudes to formality or informality in contemporary language use, both in this book and in the language examples you collect throughout your studies.

Worked example

Consider the annotations of the example below. The excerpt is from an article published on *The Conversation*: 'First near-complete sauropod dinosaur skull found in Australia hints at ancient links between continents' by Stephen Poropat, a research associate at Curtin University.



I was part of the dig team from the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum that made the discovery, and subsequently had the privilege of leading the team that studied the skull. After years of work, our results are published today in Royal Society Open Science.

The skull belonged to a creature we have dubbed 'Ann': a member of the species *Diamantinasaurus matildae* which shows surprising similarities to fossils found halfway across the world, lending weight to the theory that dinosaurs once roamed between Australia and South America via an Antarctic land connection.

A good skull is hard to find

The sauropod dinosaurs have been a source of lifelong fascination for me, and finding a sauropod skull was one of my childhood dreams. Sadly, the fossil record is biased towards preserving sauropod limbs, vertebrae and ribs, and heavily against skulls.

This makes sense when you consider the processes that act on an organism's body after it dies, which palaeontologists call taphonomy.

Source: Stephen Poropat, https://theconversation.com/first-near-complete-sauropod-dinosaur-skull-found-in-australia-hints-at-ancient-links-between-continents-203405#:~:text=The%20skull%20belonged%20to%20a,via%20an%20Antarctic%20land%20connection.

Tenor: references to the writer belonging to a scientific organisation establish authority; however, use of pronouns and inclusion of personal detail create intimacy, maintaining a somewhat close tenor.

Level of formality: formality can be seen in the use of sophisticated lexemes such as 'subsequently' and 'privilege'.

Function: explanatory sentences demonstrate a referential function.

Register: the text employs a scientific register through the use of formal language and technical terms relating to biology.

Standard English: conventional grammatical patterns are used, allowing accessibility to a wide audience.

Audience: references to some scientific terms, alongside explanations of others, indicate that the audience is expected to have some familiarity with the topic, but not at a specialised level.

Develop your understanding 2.1

Read the extract below from *The Guy Who Decides*, written by Australian comedian Jimmy Rees, then answer the following questions. Throughout the book, Rees spends much of his time lampooning the conventions and rules of modern Australian society. In this faux conversation, Rees plays 'The Guy Who Decides' (in bold), who is sipping from a wine glass throughout the exchange, as well as his employee, Jason (in italics), who is querying the rules and conventions of school holidays.

Hello, sir.
Hello, Jason. Make the kids have a little break from school.
Oh, okay. How long?
A week. Nah, make it two weeks. Slurrrrrrp.
Two weeks? And do their parents have a break from work too?
No!
Right. Sooo …
The kids will be at home for two weeks, Jason.
What will their parents do?
Make them attempt to do some work from home with all the children running around, Jason.
Really?
Yeah, really. Or … they could go on a family holiday.
Well, that sounds nice.
And make the holidays wildly overpriced, Jason.
What?
Cram the airports and the holiday parks and all the holiday destinations with people, Jason. Ahaha. Slurrrrp.
Sir, that doesn't sound like a holiday.
Shut up, Jason!

Source: Jimmy Rees, *The Guy Who Decides*, Affirm Press.

1. Identify and describe one feature of Standard English in the text.
2. What is the function of the text? Provide two examples with appropriate metalanguage to support your response.
3. Describe the register. Include examples and use appropriate metalanguage.
4. Describe the tenor. Include examples and use appropriate metalanguage.
5. Identify the audience. Consider the situational and cultural context in your response.

UNIT 3

Language variation and purpose

Area of Study 1: Informality

Unit 3, Area of Study 1 explores how we use informal language in our everyday lives for different functions and purposes.

The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- the role of Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in informal texts
- the features of informal writing and informal speech as represented in a range of texts
- the relationship between context and features of language in informal texts
- features of spoken discourse in creating informal texts
- features of informal speech and writing
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the use of informal language for various purposes and intents
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in informal texts
- conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend and line numbers
- metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts.

The key knowledge points ‘the features of informal writing and informal speech as represented in a range of texts’ and ‘metalanguage to discuss informal language in texts’ are covered throughout the chapters for this area of study. Chapter 3 explores the language features that contribute to informality in a text. Chapter 4 looks at the purposes and functions of informal language, and Chapter 5 examines how informal language features and strategies are used in discourse, including how these operate to achieve coherence and cohesion.

Unit 3, Area of Study 1 requires you to identify, describe and analyse how writers and speakers use informal language to meet the needs and expectations of a variety of situational and cultural contexts. Chapter 6 provides practice for each major assessment type you may face, with a focus on how informal language is used for a variety of purposes.

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CHAPTER 03

Features of informal language

Chapter 3 explores the vibrant features of informal language, delving into aspects such as subsystem patterning, colloquial expressions, slang, taboo language and the use of visual symbols such as emoticons and emojis. These elements often shape our daily conversations and casual communications, reflecting creativity, authenticity and cultural nuances. Through examining these features, this chapter reveals how informal language enriches our social connections and linguistic expression in various contexts.

Key knowledge covered:

- features of informal speech and writing, including:
    - subsystem patterning
    - colloquial language
    - slang
    - taboo language
    - dysphemism
    - swearing
    - emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes
- the relationship between context and features of language in informal texts

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Colloquial language	A type of casual and relaxed informal language that is often location-specific.
Slang	Newly formed words and phrases that are commonly found in very informal contexts. They can be playful in nature, or even suggestive or crass.
Taboo language	Language that is considered inappropriate or insulting by a large portion of a society.

Dysphemism	An inappropriate word or phrase that is intentionally used in place of a more neutral word, to intensify the impact of the utterance.
Swearing	The use of a specific set of terms, often intentionally though sometimes unintentionally, that are deemed rude and offensive within a particular culture.
Emoticons	Visual pictures that are created using keyboard symbols, such as punctuation marks, letters and numbers.
Emojis	Small icons or pictures that are embedded into digital texts.
Context-specific graphemes	Individual symbols that represent different meanings depending on the situation in which they are used.

Features of informal texts

Informal language is inherently a flexible and creative style of language. Informal texts, both written and spoken, tend to be unplanned, dynamic and adaptable. Through this, they can express ideas and engage with their audience in a way that feels authentic and relatable.

Some common types of informal texts include:

- conversations among friends
- social media posts
- advertisements
- viral videos.

There are many different reasons why people use certain informal language features, and these are related to the purpose of the speaker or author. You will learn about the purposes and functions of informal language in detail in Chapter 4; however, as you learn about the features in this chapter, it can be helpful to keep in mind what kind of effect a certain language feature might have, and why someone might choose to use it. Understanding the connection between language features and purpose will help you as you begin to analyse texts.

Though these texts and their contexts can vary widely, there are some common features that can be seen across many different types of informal texts.

Subsystem patterning

Subsystem patterning in informal language reveals the underlying structure and creativity of everyday communication. It is often used informally for an inventive or playful effect. Some common ways in which the different types of subsystem patterning are used in informal texts are listed in the following table.

→ See pages 2–3, 4–5 and 23–5 to review subsystem patterning.

Subsystem pattern	Examples	Function in informal texts
Phonological patterns alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, rhythm and rhyme	She sells seashells by the seashore. (alliteration, consonance) He told a furphy about having a surf and turf burger in Perth. (assonance) The bath bomb sank with a splash and a fizz. (onomatopoeia) There once was a man from York / Who only ate soup with a fork. (rhythm, rhyme)	They can add emphasis or make texts more memorable and engaging, particularly in advertising. People are likely to play with phonological patterning for fun, to express creativity and to entertain their audiences.
Morphological patterns affixation, abbreviation, shortening, compounding, blending, backformation, conversion of word class, initialism, acronym and contraction	BTW, I love your hair. (initialism) I just can't swim! (contraction) Do you have the flu? (shortening) Let's have brunch. (blending) What vax did ya have? (backformation)	They can make speech and writing more efficient, particularly in written informal communication such as text messages between friends. Some morphological patterns such as abbreviations and initialisms can be specific to certain communities, helping to support in-group membership. See pages 70–1 to read about in-group membership.
Syntactic patterns antithesis, listing and parallelism	It takes one to know one. (parallelism) He was the best of mates, he was the worst of mates. (antithesis, parallelism) Easy come, easy go. (antithesis, parallelism) This weekend we're going to need food, drinks and heaps of ice cream. (listing)	They can be used to add dramatic effect or humour, make a statement seem more persuasive, emphasise a point, create rhythm, or demonstrate shared knowledge and a close social distance. Listing, particularly, can be used for efficiency.
Semantic patterns figurative language, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, simile, hyperbole, personification, animation, puns and lexical ambiguity	I've been flat out like a lizard drinking. (simile) He looked like a stunned mullet. (simile) Her place is an organised mess. (oxymoron) This car doesn't sound very happy. (personification)	These can add nuance and depth, often through expressing humour or sarcasm. They can also make the text or conversation more engaging by adding an element of playfulness and creativity. Semantic patterns operate further by facilitating cohesion and coherence through the way that language meanings are grouped and organised. Metaphors, similes and idioms are often culturally specific.

Worked example

Subsystem patterning is used in BCF's 'BCFing fun summer 2021 commercial'. The purpose of the advertisement is to engage the audience through informal language and promote the products of BCF. Consider the annotations of subsystem patterning that feature in the lyrics of the advertisement.

You can watch the advertisement here or via the QR code.

Don't let these crazy housing prices bring your spirits down
There's still a way to live the dream, I'll show you guys around
If you're into open plan, then this place is for you
Natural lighting, soaring ceilings, million-dollar views
Lots of fireplaces and countless lavatories
A peaceful water feature that makes catering a breeze
An in-ground pool, a tanning bed, a built-in home alarm
You can have a lake house and another on a farm
You don't need a big mortgage for a massive property
Just head to BCF to get a home amongst the trees
Or a piece of land that will be secondary to none
Get your home and own a piece of BCFing Fun! Hey!

Source: BCF, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vNB0m-94IY

Semantic patterning: metaphors craft imagery that appeals to the audience's desire for freedom.

Syntactic patterning: listing organises information in a clear and casual manner.

Phonolocial patterning: alliteration through the repetition of 'm' adds rhythm and playfulness.

Morphological patterning: affixation of the initialism 'BCF' with the present tense suffix '-ing' creates a unique and informal term 'BCFing', making the brand's name memorable.

Colloquial language

Colloquial language is a flexible and dynamic form of expression that captures the informal, conversational style used in everyday speech and writing. It often includes region-specific language, cultural dialects and relaxed grammar. Specific cases of colloquial language are called **colloquialisms**, and these can add authenticity and warmth to communication. In Australian society, the use of colloquial language is closely tied to our perceived national identity.

→ See pages 156–8 to learn about language and Australian national identity.

Some features of colloquial language are explored in the following table.

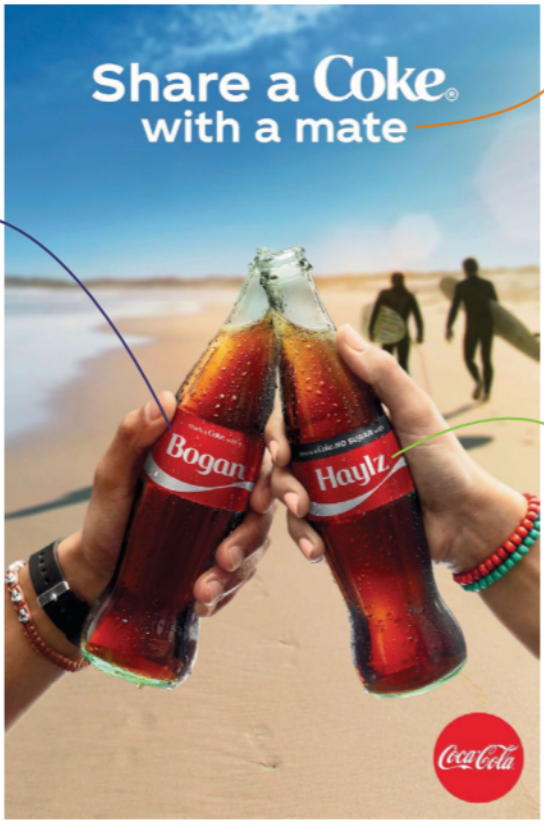
Colloquial language	Examples	Explanation
Connected speech processes	I'm gonna go out. (elision of /t/, nasal assimilation and vowel reduction)	Speech processes where words are reduced or modified. In written texts, the lexical choices are spelt as if they were spoken.

Colloquial language	Examples	Explanation
Idiomatic expressions	I'm gonna call into work, chuck a sickie, and then chuck a U-ey to head to the beach. (meaning to take a day off work by pretending to be sick, and to make a U-turn, respectively)	Words, phrases or expressions that have a figurative meaning that is often not directly translatable or understandable by speakers from different cultures or linguistic backgrounds.
Contraction	We aren't going out. (contraction of 'are not' into one word with omission of 'o')	A word formed by removing some letters and marking these with an apostrophe. They reduce the formality of a written text; however, in spoken texts, they can appear in many registers and are not as closely tied to lack of formality. They are a common feature in connected speech.
Abbreviation	BTW, I think mum's looking for you. (initialism) More info required. (shortening)	A shortened version of a word created through its initials or other symbols, or by removing components of a longer word or string of words.
Informal syntax or grammar	In a rush. Forgot my phone. (sentence fragment) I didn't go 'cause, y'know, I was just too tired. (informal conjunction and discourse marker) I ain't done nothin' wrong. (double negative) Oi, you lot, are we meeting at the park? (informal pronoun)	Some syntactic and grammatical features reduce the formality of texts. These can include sentence fragments, informal linking adverbs and conjunctions, discourse markers, double negatives, verbal phrases and informal pronouns.
Ellipsis	You going, too? (ellipsis of auxiliary verb 'are') A: Who ate the last potato cake? B: Dexter. (ellipsis of the rest of the predicate, 'ate the last potato cake')	The omission of words or phrases. Ellipsis can occur when there is shared knowledge and context between the speaker and listener. Ellipsis can be found in both formal and informal language; however, it is generally more prevalent in informal language. This is because informal language often prioritises efficiency and ease of communication and ellipsis helps achieve this by eliminating redundancy.

Regionally specific language	mate (generally meaning friend but also extends as an address to acquaintances in English-speaking countries, especially Australia and New Zealand) bogan (slightly derogatory reference in Australia and New Zealand to someone who is uncultured or unsophisticated, and typically of lower socio-economic status) thongs (meaning a type of rubber sandal in Australia; a type of narrow underwear in the US)	Informal words or phrases that are commonly used in a specific region or part of a country. They are typically not widely understood or used in the same way outside of that region. These colloquialisms often arise from local cultural, historical or social influences and can serve as linguistic markers, offering insights into the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of a particular area and its people.
Shortening of names	Baz (shortening of Barry, Basil, Barnaby or Sebastian) Tim (shortening of Timothy) Nat (shortening of Natalie, Nathan or Nathaniel) Murph (shortening of Murphy) Ern (shortening of Ernie or Ernest)	Nicknames are especially prevalent in Australia. These shortened names can be affectionate, casual or simply a quicker way to say someone's name.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of informal language features used in the Coca-Cola 'Share a Coke' advertising campaign. Informal language is used in the following advertisement to create a connection with Australian consumers through reflecting cultural familiarity, encouraging social bonding and creating a relaxed and engaging brand image.



The popular colloquialism 'bogan,' often used to describe someone perceived as unsophisticated or of lower social status, works to achieve humour while making the product relatable to a broader target audience.

The Australian colloquialism 'mate' is commonly used as a friendly term of address. It is often viewed as quintessentially Australian, symbolising mateship and cultural norms attached to perceptions that Australians are easygoing and laid-back.

The nickname 'Haylz' is an informal shortening of the name 'Hayley' (or one of its various other spellings like 'Haley' or 'Haylee'). Nicknames such as this are often used in casual settings to indicate affection.

Source: Ricki Green, https://campaignbrief.com/aussies-can-taste-the-feeling-of-tv-fame-with-return-of-share-a-coke-campaign-via-ogilvy/

Develop your understanding 3.1

Read the following text exchange then answer the following questions.

Raj
1 Murph just left mine, looked like death.

Tez
2 Yeah what's up with him?

Raj
3 He hasn't told his parents about his SAC mark for English.
4 He's freaking out.

Tez
5 Tbh not surprised lots of pressure. His mum is going to lose it.
6 His dad is going to totally lose it.

Raj
7 Yeah I reckon they'll make him repeat.

Tez
8 Can you imagine. Nope, nah, no thanks.

1 Annotate the morphological, syntactic and semantic patterning within the transcript. Use specific metalanguage when identifying examples.
2 Identify two examples of colloquial language within the text.
3 How does the colloquial language contribute to the register of the text?

Slang

Slang consists of newly coined words and phrases that are regarded as very informal. It is more common in speech than writing and it is typically restricted to a particular context or group of people. For example, modern slang terms associated with young people might include ‘sus’ (meaning ‘suspicious’), ‘tea’ (meaning ‘gossip’) and ‘bet’ (expressing agreement). Slang words can often represent a trend or fashion in society at large, and may fall out of use relatively quickly.

Slang terms differ from colloquialisms in that they are less universally accepted, used and understood in the wider community – they tend to be tied to smaller social and cultural groups.

Taboo language

Taboo language consists of words, phrases and expressions that are considered socially or culturally inappropriate within a particular community or context. It can include vulgar and obscene language, swearing, dysphemism and language that demeans, insults and denigrates. As a result, taboo language is typically used in informal rather than formal contexts by speakers and writers. The use of taboo language is highly context-dependent and subject to what is considered ‘taboo’ in cultural and social norms.

For example, discussions about bodily functions can be considered taboo in many contexts. To avoid discussing it directly, many might say ‘go to the bathroom’; however taboo language might address the topic directly and say ‘take a p*ss’.

People use taboo language in order to add emotion or humour, strengthen social bonds or demonstrate that they belong to a particular social group that uses such terms. They may also adopt these inappropriate expressions into their vocabulary to express playfulness and to deliberately flout social conventions.

Dysphemism

Dysphemism is the use of words and expressions that are intentionally harsh, offensive or derogatory to describe a particular person, group or concept. For example, calling someone names such as a ‘snake’ or a ‘rat’ has negative connotations of being deceptive or a traitor, respectively. Dysphemistic language is typically used in relation to sensitive and taboo topics.

Unlike **euphemism** (the use of language to soften or mask the true nature of a concept), dysphemism purposefully employs language that is considered blunt, direct or impolite. Dysphemistic language can be used for various reasons, including expressing strong emotions, demonstrating contempt or disdain, or making a persuasive argument through negative characterisation.

Swearing

Swearing, also known as profanity or cursing, involves the use of offensive and socially inappropriate language. Swearing can be used to abuse and intimidate others, to add emphasis, to reflect an informal context, to convey a negative idea, or as a coping mechanism for pain and suffering.

Swearing is relatively accepted in Australian society, so much so that public figures are rarely censured for their use of it. However, swearing to abuse others is generally considered unacceptable.

Worked example

Consider the annotations of informal language features in the conversation between two friends, Bobby and Calum, below.

Bobby: That podcast was the mo=st messed up sh*t ever/
Calum: Nah (.) it was awesome/
The best part was when the old guy described the murder,
(..) cree=py as\
Bobby: Ugh (.) I was so freaked out (.) I couldn't sleep after/
Calum: Are you taking the p*ss?
It was not that scary\
Bobby: I just don't get the hype with this (.) true crime bull\
Why do you wanna hear about people getting whacked?

Casual use of swearwords emphasises the point, indicates a close rapport and reduces social distance.

Slang terms indicate a close rapport.

Moderately dysphematic expression flouts societal norms of politeness, reflecting the informal context of the conversation.

Linguistic reduction of phrase 'want to' into contraction 'wanna' reflects the informal nature of the conversational exchange.

Develop your understanding 3.2

Consider how taboo language is used in the following conversation between Rita and Sam, two recently retired friends who have decided to go camping.

1 Rita: You still keen for camping this weekend?
2 Sam: Only cause it was such a bugger finding a campsite\
3 I can't rea=lly be arsed (.) but will be good once we're there\

4 Rita: Yeah (.) and as long as the weather isn't completely crap,
5 we'll have a good time/
6 Bloody winter/
7 Sam: No=thing like the icy seat of the drop dunny on ya bum,
8 to complete the camping experience/
9 Rita: Oh crap (.) Pardon the pun (.) but I forgot about the drop toilets\

1. Identify the purpose of the conversation.
2. How does the taboo language contribute to the overall purpose of the conversation?
3. What does the use of swearing on lines 2 and 6 reveal about the tenor of the conversation?
4. What does the use of slang and dysphemism throughout the conversation reveal about the participants?
5. This conversation occurred in a private chat. Do you think the participants would use different language if this was a public conversation? Why/why not?

Emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes

Emoticons, **emojis** and **context-specific graphemes** are visual language features that can convey emotions, represent objects or concepts, and serve specific purposes. They facilitate communication and add an additional layer of meaning and expression to written and digital texts.

Scan the code or click here to watch a video about writing on emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes, on our webpage of further resources.

Emoticons

Emoticons are visual representations, typically facial expressions or emotions, created using keyboard characters. They comprise punctuation marks, letters and numbers that are arranged in a specific way to create a recognisable visual concept. They are often used to add a sense of emotion. In contemporary society, they are less frequently used than emojis, as most devices will translate emoticons that have been entered by a user into related emojis.

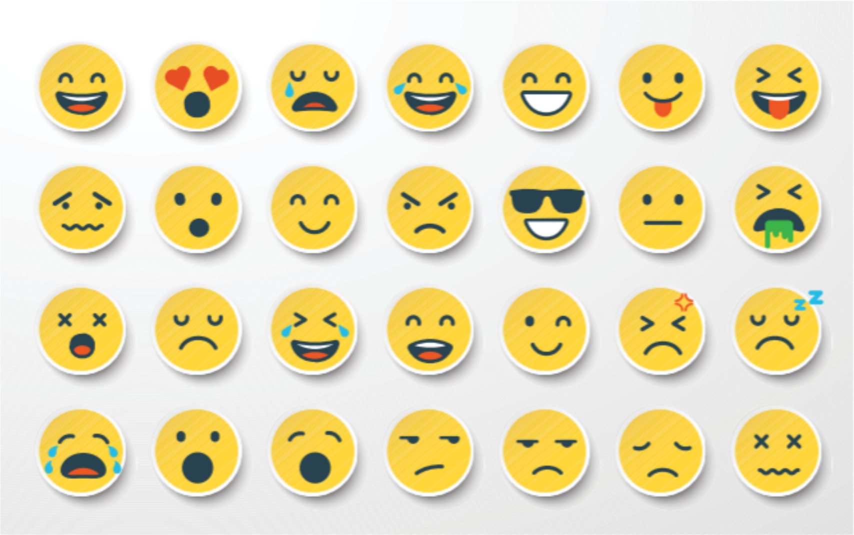
Some examples of common emoticons are listed in the following table.

Emoticon	Meaning
:)	happy
:(	sad
;)	winking
:D	big grin
:P	playful sticking out of tongue
:O	surprised face
:/	uncertain
XD	strong laughter, joy
><	frustration, annoyance
^-^	excited, pleased
=^.^=	playful, cheerful (i.e. like a cat)
<3	love, care

Emojis

Emojis are pictorial symbols or icons used to represent various emotions, objects, activities and concepts in digital communication. They are designed to visually convey meaning and add nuance to text-based messages.

The meaning of an emoji can differ based on the situational and cultural context in which it is used. For example, the praying hands emoji can mean prayer, gratitude, a plea for help, spirituality or a conveyance of condolence. Because emojis rely heavily on contextual meaning in order to be understood, they can often act as a form of slang, with meanings that are not necessarily understood by the wider community.



Context-specific graphemes

Much like emoticons and emojis, context-specific graphemes allow us to communicate with more depth in a written text. The meanings of these graphemes may differ based on context, such as with the '^' symbol meaning exponentiation in mathematics and 'see above' in conversational social contexts. Context-specific graphemes assist in adding a layer of understanding and coherence to a text that would otherwise be difficult to convey explicitly. They are often used for efficiency of communication.

Some frequently used context-specific graphemes are explained in the table below.

Context-specific grapheme	Explanation
&	Used to represent the conjunction 'and,' an ampersand is often placed in contexts where style and conciseness are desired. While it can be used in both formal and informal contexts, it is more common in informal contexts that prioritise efficiency (e.g. text messages and social media posts).
@	The 'at' sign is used in email addresses and also as a method of selecting another 'speaker' in online communication, particularly on social media. This context-specific grapheme typically signals to the user it is directed at that they have been referred to and is often used as a prompt for them to respond.
^	In online exchanges, especially when doubled or tripled, the circumflex symbol is used to call conversational participants' attention to the post directly previous to the author's post.
*	Asterisks can be used to signal footnotes at the bottom of texts, provide emphasis in messages online, indicate missing letters in swearwords (e.g. 'sh*t'), or represent mathematical multiplication. In linguistics, the asterisk represents an ungrammatical phrase, clause or sentence or a historically unattested, reconstructed form of a word.
#	Once solely used to denotatively mean 'number,' the hashtag has broadened in meaning to also represent a topic or categorising marker online. Further to this, it has frequently been used in contemporary society as a form of social bonding as well as a signal and call for activism.

Worked example

Throughout the course of your studies in English Language, be on the lookout for news coverage and commentary on issues that relate to key knowledge you learn about. This will position you to demonstrate your understanding of the subject by applying it to contemporary-based examples. The article discussed below was written by Mark Saunokonoko and published on the Nine News website. It provides an example of the implications of emoji use when meanings are not always recognised. The article also raises legal implications for the Australian context.

Scan the code or click here to read the article.

Consider the following discussion on the nuances and implications of emoji use for specific intents or purposes.

Emojis, while a popular and visually engaging form of digital communication, can inadvertently lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. These pictorial symbols add a layer of nuance to text-based messages and are designed to encapsulate emotions, objects, activities and concepts. However, their heavy reliance on contextual interpretation makes them akin to slang, where meanings are not universally recognised. A recent example reported by Mark Saunokonoko on the Nine News website underscores this point. Saunokonoko provides an account of how a Canadian farmer used a ‘thumbs-up’ emoji in a text, intending to convey that he would review a contract at a later date. However, the court ruled that the emoji served as a non-traditional means to ‘sign’ the document. The buying representative, who had previous text-based contracts with the farmer, noted that, in past interactions, the farmer had used phrases like ‘ok’, ‘yup’ or ‘looks good’. This time, the ‘thumbs-up’ emoji was the point of contention. Thus, the complexities of digital communication, especially with the use of emojis, are now being recognised in legal contexts. As Andrew Rich from Australian law firm Slater and Gordon points out, Australian courts might view such overseas legal decisions as a form of guidance, emphasising the potential legal implications of miscommunication in our digital age. This reveals the importance of understanding the evolving nature of language in our increasingly digital interactions, especially as emojis, with their varied interpretations, can easily be misunderstood.

Introduces the widespread use and visual appeal of emojis in digital communication while also highlighting the central issue of potential miscommunication arising from their use.

Highlights the challenge of emoji use in that they require context for accurate interpretation.

Introduces a contemporary example to illustrate the main challenge of emoji use.

Provides specifics of the example as reported in the article.

Highlights the established relationship between the two parties to contextualise the farmer’s customary method of expressing agreement, and to underscore the central dispute over the emoji’s interpretation.

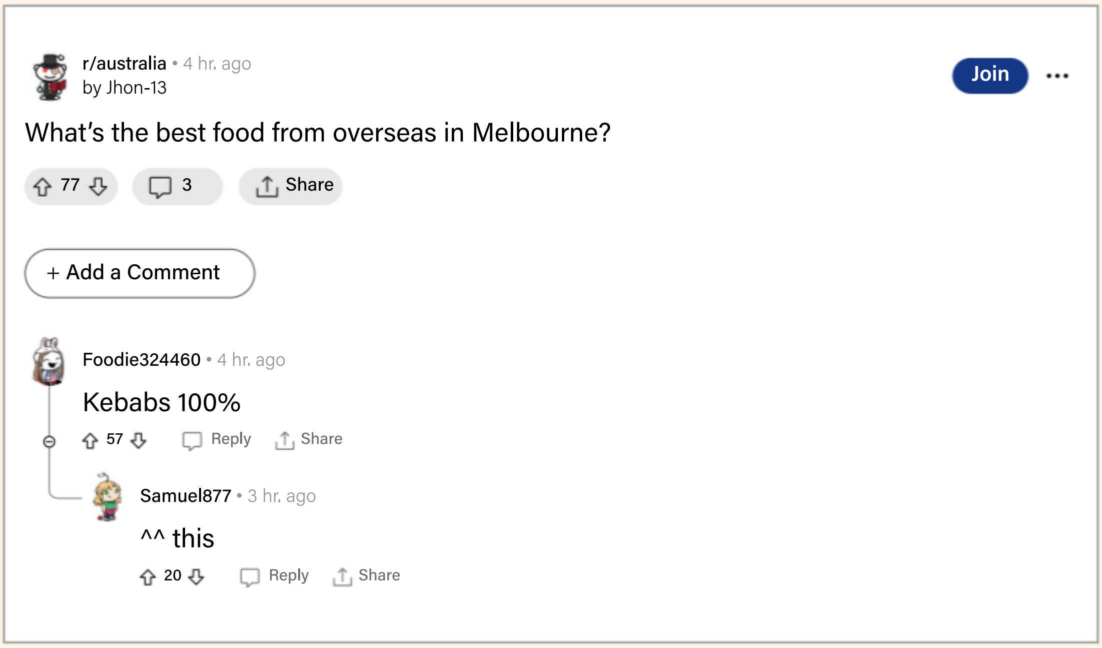
Transitions to the broader implications of digital communication challenges.

Conveys the overarching message of adapting to the evolving digital language landscape and concludes by emphasising the inherent challenges and potential pitfalls of using emojis in digital communication.

Drawing futher evidence from the article, cites a specific legal expert for credibility.

Develop your understanding 3.3

1 Analyse why the author may have used the context-specific grapheme ‘^^’ in the online post below.



r/australia • 4 hr. ago
by Jhon-13

What’s the best food from overseas in Melbourne?

Foodie324460 • 4 hr. ago

Kebabs 100%

Samuel877 • 3 hr. ago

^^ this

2 Would you rather use an emoticon or an emoji when communicating online? Does it matter who your target audience is?

3 Explore the different meanings that some emojis hold. Provide examples of the contexts in which they would be used, as well as a description of their implied meanings.

Some examples to consider:

🤔 *(thinking face)*
💯 *(a hundred points)*
😂 *(tears of joy face)*
👏 *(clapping hands)*

Below is list of the implied meanings of the grinning face with sweat emoji: 😅

Nervous laughter or awkwardness (‘I can’t believe I did that 😅’)

Relief after a challenging situation (‘Finally finished the project 😅’)

Lightheartedness or playfulness (‘I’m such a goof 😅’)

Humorously acknowledging a mistake or mishap (‘Oops! 😅’)

Informal language features and contexts

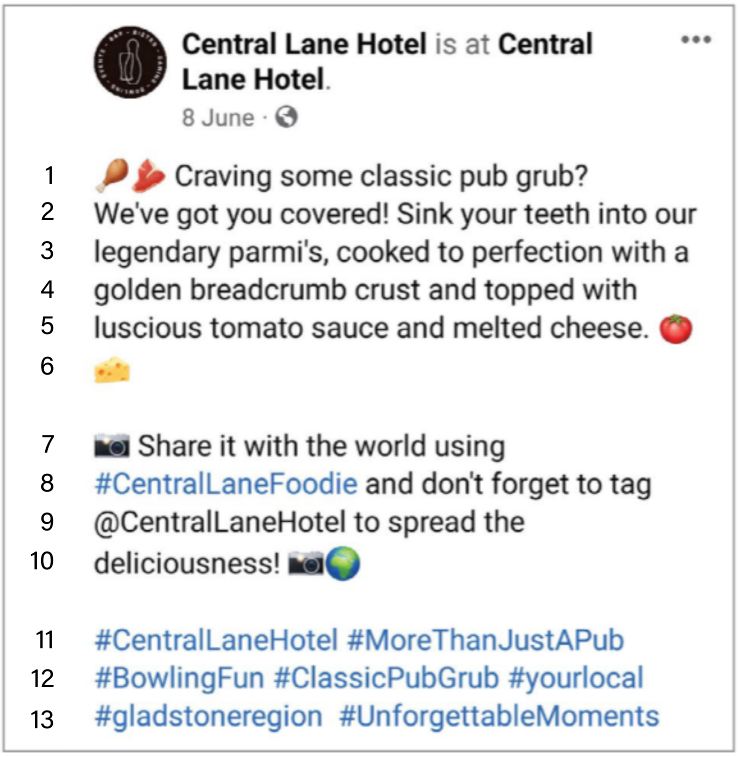
The relationship between context and the features of language in informal texts is tightly interwoven. When examining these connections, it's important to consider tenor as this is an essential part of context and is significantly influenced by the selection and usage of language features. That is, the relationship between the sender and receiver of a communicative exchange is significant to the construction of informal texts.

Situational context plays a pivotal role in shaping the construction of the text. This extends to the text's informality, with the language likely to feature colloquialisms, abbreviations and perhaps even in-jokes or references that reflect shared understanding between sender and receiver.

Furthermore, cultural context is intrinsically linked to the language used. The cultural background of both the sender and the intended receiver informs the language choices made by participants. This is especially evident in informal texts where cultural colloquialisms, slang and culturally-specific references are more prevalent.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the relationship between context and features of informal language in the Facebook post from Central Lane Hotel, a venue located in Gladstone, Queensland.



Central Lane Hotel is at **Central Lane Hotel**.
8 June ·

🍗🥩 Craving some classic pub grub? We've got you covered! Sink your teeth into our legendary parmi's, cooked to perfection with a golden breadcrumb crust and topped with luscious tomato sauce and melted cheese. 🍅 🧀

📷 Share it with the world using #CentralLaneFoodie and don't forget to tag @CentralLaneHotel to spread the deliciousness! 📷🌍

#CentralLaneHotel #MoreThanJustAPub #BowlingFun #ClassicPubGrub #yourlocal #gladstoneregion #UnforgettableMoments

Source: Central Lane Hotel, https://www.facebook.com/CentralLaneHotel/posts/pfbid04Ah61AhKtVUGjA3gPMvjLJz3SEmKeznCJ961V6PzxJMxF7Myk2fPyRr8NP4Vcz4Ul

The Facebook post from Central Lane Hotel uses language with a conative function, designed to attract potential patrons to their venue. The situational context is a hotel promoting its food and service on social media. Consequently, the language takes on a promotional style as evident in the imperative phrase 'sink your teeth' (line 2) which is used as a creative and compelling way to encourage the audience to try the restaurant's chicken parmigiana. The adjective 'legendary' (line 3) implies that the parmigiana is not just an ordinary meal, but one that is well-known and enjoyed by many, and therefore a must-have for new customers. The sentence in its entirety serves to issue a directive to the reader in an informal, conversational style, which is typical in promotional contexts like this.

The text also incorporates food emojis, such as those representing a drumstick (line 1), beef steak (line 1), tomato (line 5) and wedge of cheese (line 6). As an integral part of digital communication norms, emojis serve as an engaging visual language that depends on the audience's familiarity with their symbolic meanings. In this context, the emojis are used to create a vivid, appetising image of the food on offer. Their connotative meanings, portraying the dishes being advertised, are likely to be universally understood by the target audience, further illustrating their purposeful use in the promotional message.

The text encourages customers of the restaurant to share their experiences, with specific hashtags embedded into imperatives, for instance 'share it with the world using #CentralLaneFoodie' (line 8) and 'don't forget to tag @ CentralLaneHotel to spread the deliciousness!' (lines 8–10). This is typical practice in social media marketing designed to boost engagement and outreach.

The cultural context is showcased through the use of specific Australian slang. For instance, 'parmi' (line 3) is a regional colloquialism for 'chicken parmigiana' often used in Queensland as opposed to states like Victoria that use the colloquial form 'parma'. The slang containing a rhyme, 'pub grub' (line 1) can also be seen as relating to the Australian cultural context, as this is a commonly used slang phrase in Australia. Overall, the context of this text, a social media post by a hotel in Queensland, significantly shapes the language features used. It is informal, conversational in style and culturally specific, and is designed to connect with a local audience in a familiar and friendly way.

Introduces the text and identifies its primary function to attract patrons.

Identifies the situational context.

Explains the promotional style and analyses the function of an imperative phrase.

Analyses the use of a specific adjective to enhance the appeal of the food.

Summarises the overall effect of the sentence, emphasising its directive and informal style.

Introduces the use of emojis with textual evidence.

Explains the broader role of emojis in digital communication.

Describes the specific purpose of emojis in this context and explains their connotative meanings.

Analyses the use of hashtags and imperatives to encourage customer engagement.

Provides a general statement about social media marketing practices.

Introduces the analysis of cultural context as achieved through slang.

Analyses a specific examples of Australian slang and its regional variations.

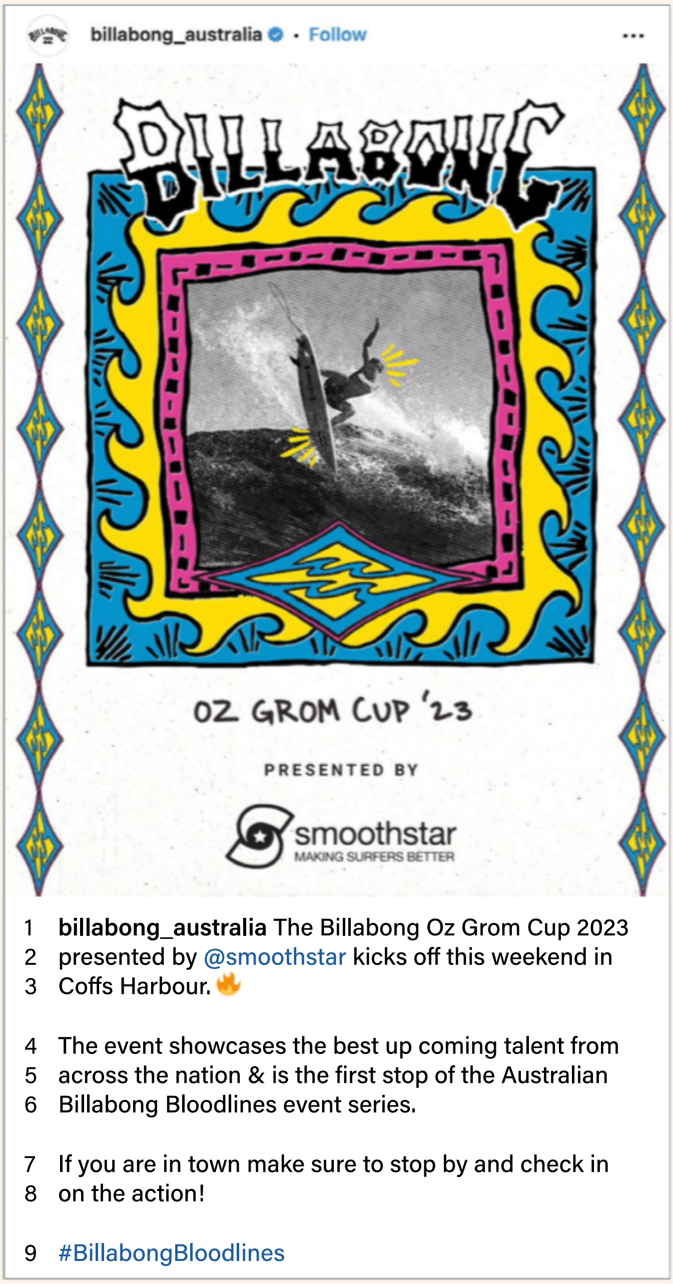
Analyses another example of slang, focusing on its cultural relevance.

Summarises the overall analysis, emphasising the context, informality and cultural specificity of the text.

Develop your understanding 3.4

Billabong is an Australian company primarily known for producing clothing, accessories and wetsuits for surfing, skating and snowboarding. Billabong's products are popular among surfers and skateboarders, and those who identify with the casual, outdoor lifestyle. In addition to selling attire, Billabong sponsors various surfing competitions and events, further solidifying its connection to the surfing community.

Write an analysis of the relationship between context and features of informal language in the Instagram post by Billabong.



billabong_australia The Billabong Oz Grom Cup 2023 presented by @smoothstar kicks off this weekend in Coffs Harbour. 🔥

The event showcases the best up coming talent from across the nation & is the first stop of the Australian Billabong Bloodlines event series.

If you are in town make sure to stop by and check in on the action!

#BillabongBloodlines

Source: Billabong Australia & NZ, https://www.instagram.com/p/CrAmqFRRg9G/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==

CHAPTER

04

Purposes and functions of informal language

In this chapter, we delve into the multifaceted roles of informal language. By exploring these functions and purposes, we deepen our understanding of the impact informal language has on social interactions, language development and the formation of relationship bonds. This chapter will enhance your appreciation of the richness, versatility and significance of informal language in our everyday lives.

Key knowledge covered:

- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the use of informal language for various purposes and intents, including:
    - encouraging intimacy, solidarity and equality
    - politeness strategies
    - promoting linguistic innovation
    - promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport
    - supporting in-group membership

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Intimacy	A sense of closeness and connection between individuals.
Solidarity	A feeling of unity between individuals, based on shared experience or purpose.
Equality	A sense that individuals in a particular exchange are of equal status, deserving of mutual respect.
Positive politeness	Language strategies that reflect how another person is valued and positively regarded by others.
Negative politeness	Language strategies that respect another individual's ability to act autonomously and reduce constraints on their freedom.

Linguistic innovation	The manipulation of existing language features to create something new, such as new terms, expressions and pronunciations.
Social harmony	A positive social environment in which all individuals feel comfortable, respected and at ease with each other.
Social taboos	Topics that are considered uncomfortable or controversial, and are typically avoided or equivocated in social contexts.
Rapport	A sense of friendliness, harmony and shared understanding in a relationship.
In-group membership	A sense of belonging to any kind of social group, such as a family, community, classroom, friendship group or group defined by a shared interest (e.g. fans of a particular musician, or a sporting club).

Major functions that language serves in informal contexts

In any given text, multiple functions might be served simultaneously. These functions provide a useful framework for understanding the diverse ways in which language is used in different contexts, including informal ones. The following provides a summary of the major functions that language serves when used in informal contexts.

→ See pages 33–4 to view the definitions of the major functions that language serves.

Referential

The communication of information might occur in casual conversations about everyday life, when gossiping or through the sharing of news.

Emotive

People often use language to express emotions, using exclamation marks, emojis or words and phrases that indicate feelings.

Conative

As this function is oriented towards the receiver of the message, it is about persuading, requesting or commanding. In informal contexts, this might involve inviting a friend to a party or asking someone to do a favour.

Phatic

This function is about creating bonds, and often involves small talk, greetings or checking in with someone.

Metalinguistic

The discussion of language itself could involve asking the meaning of a slang term or talking about how a particular emoji is used.

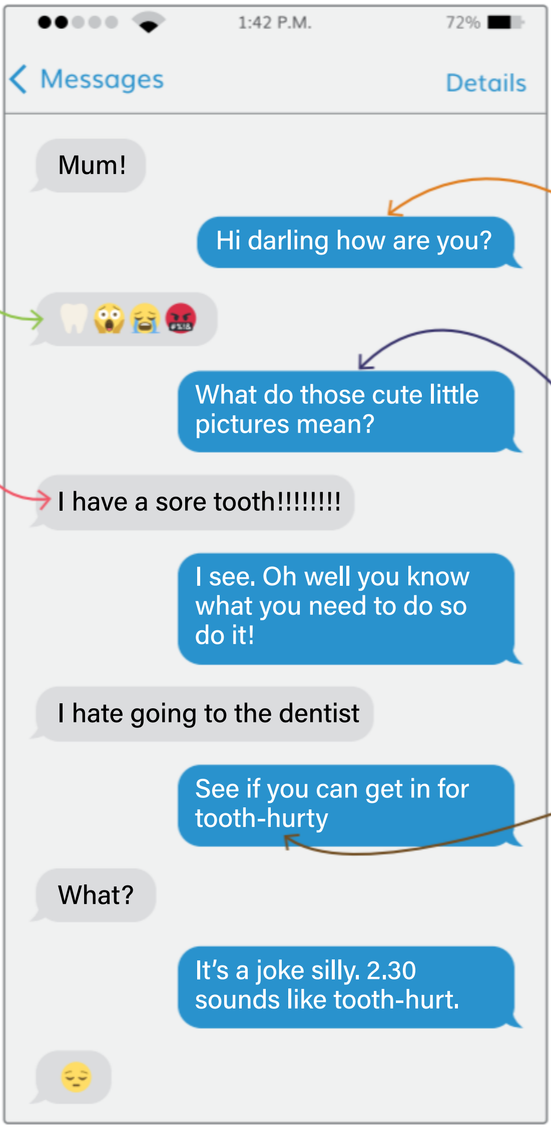
Poetic

This function involves focusing on the aesthetic features of language, such as rhymes, puns or interesting phrasing. This can be found in playful texts.

Worked example

Below is a text message exchange between a mother and her daughter, Imogen. Imogen has messaged to inform her mother that she is experiencing a toothache and consequently is in pain.

Consider the analysis of the functions of language as achieved in the informal text message exchange.



Mum!

Hi darling how are you?

🦷😱😭🤬

What do those cute little pictures mean?

I have a sore tooth!!!!!!!!

I see. Oh well you know what you need to do so do it!

I hate going to the dentist

See if you can get in for tooth-hurty

What?

It's a joke silly. 2.30 sounds like tooth-hurt.

😔

The emojis are serving the **emotive** function. These allow Imogen to convey specific feelings relating to her experience of a toothache to her mother.

The declarative sentence 'I have a sore tooth!!!!!!!!' primarily serves a **referential** function, as it provides information about Imogen's toothache. However, the use of multiple exclamation marks can be seen as achieving an **emotive** function as it amplifies the intensity of the pain experienced by Imogen.

The informal greeting 'hi' along with the term of endearment 'darling' and interrogative 'how are you?' all operate to achieve a **phatic** function. They are being used by the mother to inquire as to the wellbeing of her daughter.

The interrogative, 'What do those cute little pictures mean?' serves a **metalinguistic** function as Imogen's mother seeks to comprehend the emojis that her daughter has used.

The pun 'tooth-hurty', which is a play on a time of day (2:30), serves a **poetic** function. This allows Imogen's mother to creatively manipulate language for humorous effect.

Develop your understanding 4.1

The following excerpt is from the Quay Australia website. Quay Australia is a fashion brand known for its sunglasses, which have modern styles, bold frames and fashionable lenses. The company was founded in Melbourne, Australia in 2004.

> Style is QUAY. For fresh new styles that'll have all eyes on you, shop QUAY's sunglasses for women and men. You can flex all kinds of shady silhouettes, no matter what shape you're into at the moment. Pop on HIGH KEY for classic cult-fave aviator sunglasses to bring fly vibes to your everyday getup. Love a feline flick? CALL THE SHOTS with timeless cat eye sunglasses. But that's not all — you can turn heads your way with round, square, rectangle, and shield sunnies, too. With everything from small to extra large sizes, you can also pick up a just-right fit.
>
> Besides amping up your specs appeal with the perfect fit, don't forget deets like frame style and lens finish. When it comes to frame style, you can experiment with classic torts, sleek metals, easy-going neutrals, fun colours, or classic black. Plus, you can level up with different lenses: Take your pick from fade, mirrored, blackout, and polarised sunglasses for the finish you want. (P.S. You can also find many QUAY faves as blue light glasses for all your streaming, scrolling, and Zooming needs.) Whatever your vibe, find effortlessly cool sunnies from QUAY to upgrade your everyday look.

Source: Quay Australia, https://www.quayaustralia.com.au/collections/all-sunnies

1. What is the primary function of the text and how is it achieved?
2. How does the text perform an emotive function? Give examples.
3. What elements in the text create an engaging and informal style, reflecting the brand's personality?
4. Identify an example of slang in the text and explain how it contributes to the brand's image.
5. Explain how the text performs a phatic function. What language choices contribute to this function?
6. How do 'shady silhouettes' (line 2) and 'feline flick' (lines 4–5) achieve a poetic function?
7. Identify further examples of the poetic function in the text and discuss how they contribute to the brand's unique personality.
8. How do the various text functions work together to appeal to a fashionable, youthful audience?

Purposes and intents of informal language

Informal language is spontaneous, flexible and adaptable in nature. It can help to build relationships, foster a sense of belonging within groups, and ease the navigation of sensitive or contentious topics. The use of informal language enhances our interactions, adding layers of complexity and intimacy to our communication.

Intimacy, solidarity and equality

Informal language is primarily used between people with a close relationship, and generally operates to deepen or reiterate this relationship. This is because written and spoken informal language features can build a sense of connection and emphasise feelings of shared purpose and mutual respect.

Intimacy

Intimacy is a sense of closeness, familiarity and personal connection. Informal language can often be used to build intimacy as it allows for more authentic and personalised expression compared to formal language, which tends to have more rules and conventions surrounding its use.

Intimacy in informal language is often characterised by a range of language features. For instance, the use of colloquialisms and slang establishes familiarity and shared understanding, laying the foundation for a deeper connection between language users. First names, nicknames, terms of endearment and personal pronouns like ‘you’ and ‘I’ also create a similar sense of closeness.

Language that carries emotive functions is also important and includes forms such as emojis, exclamations and interjections. These provide a direct and expressive way of communicating feelings, invite empathy from the receiver and enhance the sense of a shared emotional space. Informal grammar and punctuation in writing, such as run-on sentences or the liberal use of punctuation marks, can establish a casual style that mirrors the intimacy of face-to-face conversation.

Solidarity

Solidarity in language is about creating a sense of unity or shared purpose within a group of people. Informal texts serve as critical platforms for fostering this feeling through drawing on collective language, common experiences and unifying grammatical devices.

Expressions of mutual support, often in the form of encouraging words and phrases like ‘We got this!’ or ‘Go Team!’, can foster a strong sense of unity. Language terms that are only used in a specific group can also promote solidarity by drawing on shared knowledge and experiences. For example, a group of fans of a particular musician may jokingly reference lyrics in a casual conversation, reiterating their common interest.

The use of collective pronouns such as ‘we’, ‘us’, and ‘our’ also reinforces this sense of a shared identity. They signal that the speaker or writer is placing themselves within the group they are addressing. Language with an emotive function can express collective feelings and reactions, fostering a sense of emotional connection and unity. Ultimately, solidarity as achieved through informal texts extends beyond the individual. It reinforces the notion that members of the group stand together in their endeavours or beliefs.

Equality

Equality in language use, whether it be in spoken or written texts, is the notion that all participants in a communication exchange are perceived and treated as equals, irrespective of their social status, role or power. This sense of equality is manifested through various types of informal language that work towards blurring perceived hierarchies and establishing an environment of shared participation and mutual respect.

Colloquial language and slang are powerful ways of establishing equality. Colloquialisms are seen as ‘equalising’ words and phrases that don’t necessarily differentiate between social classes or levels of authority, allowing a speaker to present an authentic and genuine identity (i.e. being perceived as ‘down to earth’). Furthermore, slang can help create a relaxed atmosphere, dissolving the stiffness often associated with formal language. As a result, individuals can connect on a personal and relatable level through these linguistic forms.

Pronouns with an inclusive function further reinforce equality in informal language use. When paired with other informal language features, frequent employment of plural pronouns and possessive determiners such as ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ emphasise a shared identity and common objective, mitigating any perceived differences in status. Likewise, casual and inclusive interrogatives such as ‘What d‘ya think?’ or ‘Any ideas?’ extend an invitation for contribution, thereby affirming the value of every participant’s input. In informal contexts, formal titles indicating social or professional status are often replaced with first names or nicknames. This linguistic levelling encourages familiarity and mutual respect, as participants interact without the distinctions often marked by hierarchical identifiers.

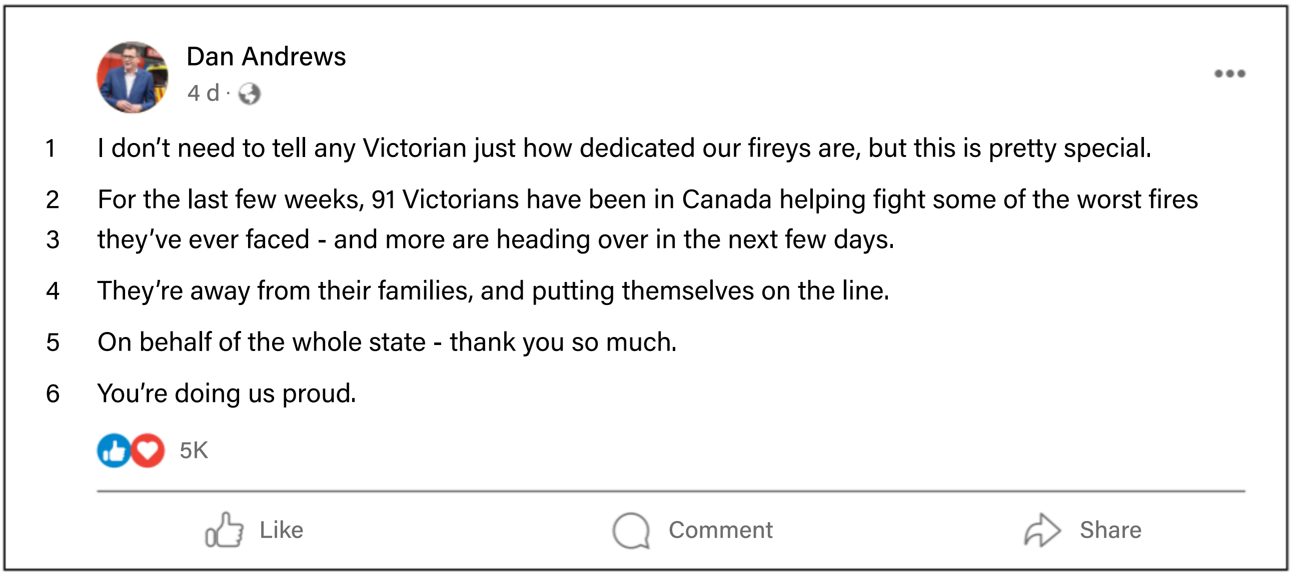
The practice of cooperative turn-taking in conversation, whether in a group chat or a team meeting, is also commonly used in informal contexts. This presents an equitable opportunity for each participant to express thoughts, pose questions and respond, to ensure mutual respect and a balanced distribution of conversational power.

Tip

Various features of informal language can contribute to the purposes of creating intimacy, solidarity and equality. When analysing a text, consider how the informal language features contribute to the intentions of the writer or speaker.

Worked example

The following is a Facebook post by Daniel Andrews, posted while he was Premier of Victoria. Consider the analysis of informal language used for encouraging intimacy, solidarity, and equality in the text below.



Dan Andrews
4 d ·

1 I don't need to tell any Victorian just how dedicated our fireys are, but this is pretty special.

2 For the last few weeks, 91 Victorians have been in Canada helping fight some of the worst fires
3 they've ever faced - and more are heading over in the next few days.

4 They're away from their families, and putting themselves on the line.

5 On behalf of the whole state - thank you so much.

6 You're doing us proud.

Dan Andrews, https://www.facebook.com/DanielAndrewsMP/

Former premier Daniel Andrew's Facebook post uses informal language to foster a sense of intimacy, solidarity and equality with his audience. This is achieved through a conversational style underscored by the use of the colloquialism 'fireys' (line 1) for firefighters, and contractions such as 'they've' (line 3), 'they're' (line 4) and 'you're' (line 6). These lexical choices foster familiarity and closeness between the then-premier and his audience. This emotional connection is further forged through the heartfelt expression of gratitude and pride, 'On behalf of the whole state – thank you so much. You're doing us proud' (lines 5–6). The adverb 'so' functions to

Frames the analysis around informal language used to encourage intimacy, solidarity and equality.

Uses metalanguage to describe examples of informal language features.

Relates the examples in the text to the subject under analysis – in this case, intimacy.

intensify the lexeme ‘much’ thereby emphasising the high levels of gratitude being expressed by the then-premier on behalf of Victorians. Moreover, the solidarity among Victorians is reinforced through declarative sentences that convey the collective efforts of ‘91 Victorians … helping fight some of the worst fires they’ve ever faced’ (lines 2–3) and those ‘putting themselves on the line’ while being ‘away from their families’ (line 4). The mention of additional firefighters heading to Canada in the coming days further emphasises a shared sense of responsibility and unity. Andrews’ choice of first-person plural pronouns ‘us’ (line 6) and ‘our’ (line 1) signifies an egalitarian perspective, suggesting that he sees himself as an integral part of the community rather than above it. All these lexical and syntactic choices contribute to the casual style of language that is typical of social media posts, while enhancing the sentiments of intimacy, solidarity and equal pride among all Victorians.

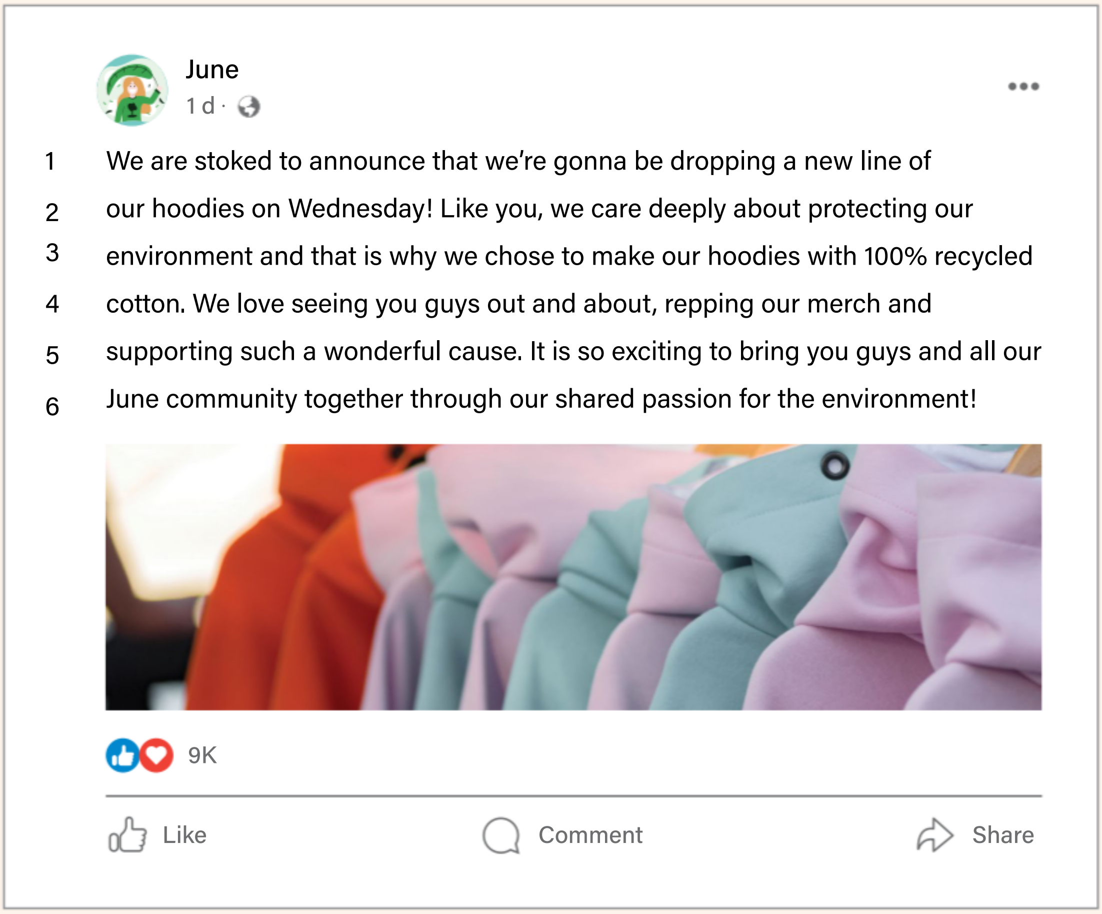
Relates the examples in the text to the subject under analysis – in this case, solidarity.

Relates the examples in the text to the subject under analysis – in this case, equality.

Sums up the overall use of informal language in encouraging intimacy, solidarity and equality.

Develop your understanding 4.2

The following is a Facebook post by environmentally sustainable brand June announcing the drop of their new hooded jumper line made from recycled cotton.



June
1 d ·

We are stoked to announce that we’re gonna be dropping a new line of our hoodies on Wednesday! Like you, we care deeply about protecting our environment and that is why we chose to make our hoodies with 100% recycled cotton. We love seeing you guys out and about, repping our merch and supporting such a wonderful cause. It is so exciting to bring you guys and all our June community together through our shared passion for the environment!

1 Annotate the text for informal language that encourages intimacy, solidarity and equality between the company and the audience of this Facebook post.

2 Write a brief analysis of the informal language used in the post, explaining how it encourages intimacy, solidarity and equality with the audience.

Politeness strategies

Informal language plays an integral role in the formation and maintenance of relationships between senders and receivers of communication. While using shared linguistic terms, casual expressions and visual symbols can create relatability and connection, this can also be achieved through the informal use of politeness strategies. This includes those aspects of language that reflect an awareness of how the communication receiver is perceived, and which operate to mitigate threats to their **positive face** needs (being valued and respected) and **negative face** needs (having agency and freedom).

Positive politeness

Positive politeness is the most frequent form of politeness used by individuals communicating informally. This entails the adoption of a more relaxed and conversational style of language that aligns with the goal of creating and maintaining a pleasant experience for all participants.

Significantly, informal language enables individuals to show genuine interest in the other person, which is a crucial aspect of positive politeness. The spontaneous nature of informal dialogue means that participants are more likely to feel as though they are receiving authentic reactions when compared to a more structured, formal interaction. Informal interrogatives, exclamations and enthusiastic responses convey curiosity and engagement, and help to strengthen the social bond between communicative participants. Inclusive language is another way informal language contributes to positive politeness. Using pronouns and possessive determiners such as ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ creates a sense of belonging and establishes common ground. It signals that the individuals see themselves as part of the same group or community, fostering a feeling of inclusiveness and solidarity. This further enhances positive politeness by promoting a sense of togetherness and shared experience.

Tip

When analysing informal language used for positive politeness, remember to examine the context, audience and purpose of the interaction to gain a deeper understanding of the intended effects of positive politeness strategies.

Some positive politeness strategies with informal examples are shown in the table below.

Positive politeness strategy	Example of informal language
Emphasising similarities	'We both know exactly what she's up to, don't we?'
Showing interest	'How did you get on with dealing with the drama? I've been dying to know.'
Using humour	'Soz about spilling my drink, I'm like an elephant wearing roller-skates.'
Offering compliments	'That's an awesome SAC score – you're so bloody smart!'
Using inclusive language	'We are pumped about going!'

Develop your understanding 4.3

Explain how informal language is used for the purpose of achieving positive politeness in each of the following examples. The first one has been completed for you.

1 *'Cheers for letting us all come over and stay'.* (using inclusive language)

The pronoun 'us' in the noun phrase 'us all' has an inclusive function as it emphasises that both the speaker and the listener are part of the same group. This fosters a sense of unity and belonging, and demonstrates the positive politeness strategy of using inclusive language.

2 *'We both know what it's like to work with that idiot, don't we?'* (emphasising similarity)

3 *'How did your prezzo go yesterday? I'm keen to hear about it.'* (showing interest)

4 *'If we finish this early, we might just get to go home! Well, we can dream, right?'* (using humour)

5 *'That's a brilliant idea, ur really awesome at this!'* (offering compliments)

6 *'Let's all go and face the music together.'* (using inclusive language)

Negative politeness

Just as positive politeness can be achieved through informal language, so too can **negative politeness**. The casual and less assertive style of informal language softens the impact of messages and reduces the potential imposition on the audience. Furthermore, the relaxed and friendly delivery of language fosters camaraderie and diminishes the perceived social distance between the communication sender and their audience.

Informal language can lend itself well to the strategy of indirectness, which is a key aspect of negative politeness. By using hints or suggestions, individuals can convey their message indirectly, allowing the audience to infer the intended meaning. For example, two friends who are gossiping about mutual acquaintances might choose to use codenames or nicknames for the people they are talking about. This serves a double purpose of keeping their interaction private, while also reinforcing their bond as the only people who can make sense of their conversation.

Some negative politeness strategies with informal examples are shown below.

Negative politeness strategy	Example of informal language
Hedging	'I'm not entirely sure, but I think we might need a lending hand.'
Being indirect and ambiguous	'Seems like we're running a bit low. Any chance someone could grab some more?'
Using low modality verbs	'Can I ask, do you reckon you could possibly cover my shift tomorrow?
Apologising	'Sorry about the crap everywhere in my bedroom, Dad.'
Applying other mitigating strategies	'Um, just wanted to give you a heads up, no offence, but I spotted a tiny hiccup in your essay.'

Tip

When analysing informal language used for negative politeness in transcripts of conversations, pay attention to expressions that respect the negative face of the interlocutor through mitigating imposition and preserving autonomy.

Worked example

The following transcript is of a conversational exchange between a teacher (T) and a student (S). On this occasion, the teacher is attempting to open a door while carrying a box of heavy books. The teacher asks a group of students close by to help in opening the door, and a student from the group responds.

Consider the analysis of informal language used for the purposes of achieving positive and negative politeness.

T: Sorry gang (.) I don't mean to disrupt your conversation/
but would you mind grabbing the door for me?
S: You got it Mr Z\
T: Thanks a bunch\
S: Hey Mr Z (.) I just wanted to say thanks for helping me out the other day\
You're a lifesaver.

In this transcript, informal language features are used to achieve positive and negative politeness, fostering a friendly and considerate atmosphere between the teacher and student. Positive politeness is exemplified by the student's use of informal address, referring to the teacher as 'Mr Z' (line 3), which shows respect and establishes a friendly rapport. Expressions of gratitude, such as 'thanks for helping me out the other day' (line 5) and referring to the teacher as a 'lifesaver'(line 6), contribute to positive politeness by acknowledging and complimenting the teacher's assistance.

To minimise any imposition on the students, negative politeness strategies are employed by the teacher. He begins by apologising for potentially disrupting the students' conversation with the slang term 'gang' (line 1) to create a sense of familiarity and rapport. Hedging is employed through the interrogative containing the modal verb 'would' as in 'would you mind grabbing the door for me?' (line 2), allowing the students the freedom to decline without feeling obligated. Overall, the positive and negative politeness strategies as achieved through informal language contribute to a cooperative, harmonious exchange that promotes mutual understanding between the teacher and student.

Introductory sentence frames the analysis around informal language used to achieve positive and negative politeness and states its overall function.

Introduces the discussion of positive politeness strategies.

Provides specific examples from the text for the purpose of showing the relationship dynamic between the speakers.

Uses metalanguage in reference to examples of informal language.

Analyses the effects created through the politeness strategies.

Develop your understanding 4.4

Read the following email, which was sent out to employees of a family-owned restaurant by their manager, Hamish. In this email, he is requesting their assistance in filling shifts due to staff shortages.

1 **Subject: a cheeky request**
2 Hey there, amazing team!
3 I just wanted to chat about the current staffing sitch.
4 So, here's the deal: we're a lil short-staffed, which is kinda making everything a bit
5 tricky. I totally get that you've already got lots on your plate, but I wanted to see if
6 any of you awesome peeps could lend a hand by taking on just a couple extra
7 shifts.
8 I know it's a big ask, and I'm really sorry if this messes with any of your plans,
9 but we would love it if you could work some magic with your availability,
10 it would be a total game-changer for our team.
11 We're all in this together, right?
12 I'm literally always on my phone, so if you need anything, just shout out.
13 Thanks a million for taking the time to read this and pleeeeeeease shoot through a

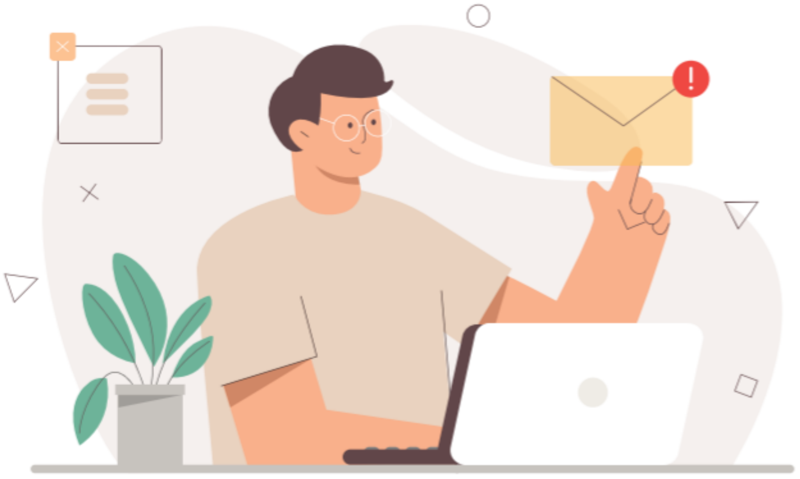
text with your updated availability.

Cheers,
Hamish
Restaurant Manager.

1 Complete the table by identifying examples of informal language used for the purpose of achieving negative politeness. The first one has been completed for you.

Negative politeness strategy	Example
Hedging	*'… which is kinda making everything a bit tricky.'*
Being indirect and ambiguous	
Using low modality verbs	
Apologising	
Applying other mitigating strategies	

2 Using the examples you have recorded in the table, write a paragraph that analyses how informal language is used in this email for the purpose of achieving negative politeness.



Promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport

Decisions made around language use are vital in creating or altering the tone of a social interaction. Informal language can be used to facilitate positive social interactions in which all participants feel comfortable and respected.

Promoting social harmony

Promoting **social harmony** can involve using language that avoids conflict, is respectful of others' feelings and promotes shared understanding. It can also involve expressing agreement, appreciation or mutual interest with the core purpose of fostering a sense of unity and cooperation between speech act participants.

Informal language features are used to promote social harmony in informal contexts. Imagine a group chat between friends discussing a potentially divisive topic. Instead of erupting into heated debate using inflammatory language, social harmony can be achieved through respectful disagreement and appreciation for diversity of opinions, as in 'Bestie, I love you but …' or 'I totally get what you're saying, but I'm coming from a different place.' Here, while participants might disagree, friendliness is maintained by using informal language features such as nicknames, and informal politeness strategies such as hedging and indirectness. These operate to encourage unity, avoid conflict and demonstrate respect, in the interest of maintaining social harmony.

Negotiating social taboos

Negotiating **social taboos** refers to navigating topics that are often considered sensitive or controversial, or that are typically avoided in social contexts. Individuals make decisions about how to best approach these topics based on factors such as subject matter, the relationship between participants, age, culture and location.

In some informal contexts, participants will communicate using indirect language, hedging or shared slang to broach these subjects. The purpose here is to allow for communication about difficult topics while still maintaining respect and understanding, and minimising discomfort and offence. However, in other informal contexts, people can use humour, slang and linguistic innovation to make light of some taboo topics. This serves the purpose of bringing participants closer together, as they acknowledge a shared understanding of a contentious topic.

Building rapport

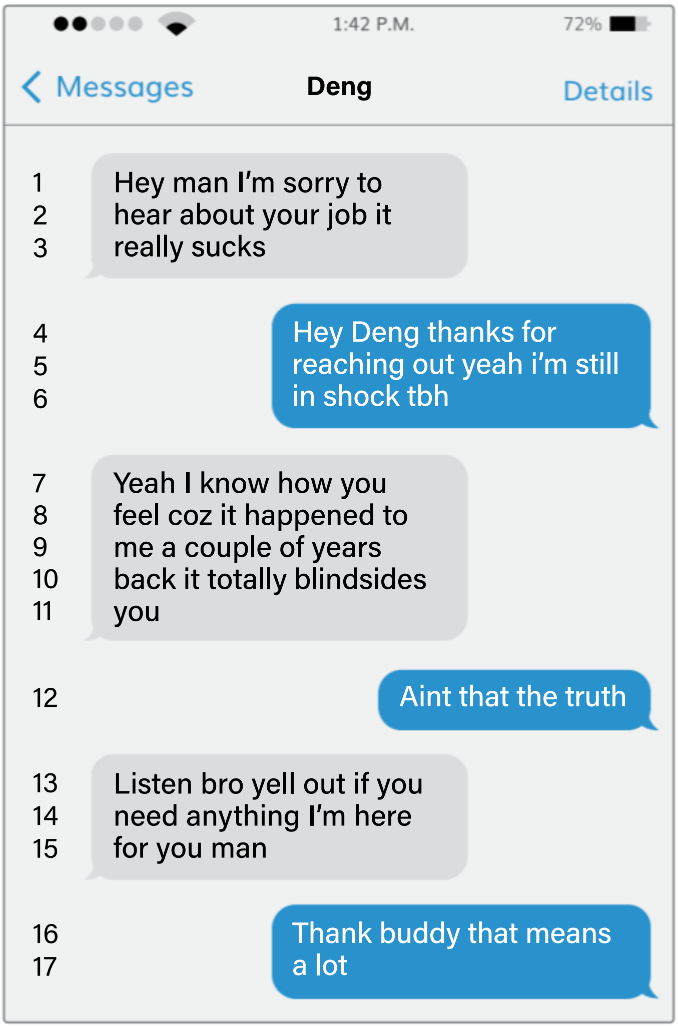
Building **rapport** is about forging a positive, close-knit relationship in which those involved can understand each other's feelings and ideas. Informal language plays a crucial role in this process, providing a path for interactions that are authentic and relaxed, making spoken and written exchanges alike feel more personal. This casual style of communication fosters deeper connections and mutual understanding among individuals.

However, it is important to acknowledge that, while informal language can foster rapport, language users need to be cautious about how different situational and cultural contexts can influence the way their language is perceived. Colloquialisms, slang, swearing and even emojis may be effective between participants, but they can also be misinterpreted or seen as inappropriate, based on varying personal or cultural perceptions. For example, some close friendship groups might comfortably use swearwords among each other, and this can build rapport by demonstrating trust and connection; however, it would be less appropriate to use swearing to build rapport with your teacher. Understanding the audience and the context is crucial to striking a balance in informality that effectively builds rapport without causing offence.

Worked example

In the following text message exchange, Deng reaches out to a friend who recently lost his job. Deng employs informal language to navigate the difficult discussion of job loss through a sympathetic and considerate tone.

Consider the analysis of informal language used in promoting social harmony, negotiating a social taboo and building rapport.



Hey man I'm sorry to hear about your job it really sucks

Hey Deng thanks for reaching out yeah i'm still in shock tbh

Yeah I know how you feel coz it happened to me a couple of years back it totally blindsides you

Aint that the truth

Listen bro yell out if you need anything I'm here for you man

Thank buddy that means a lot

> Deng uses informal language to negotiate the socially taboo topic of job loss while fostering rapport. His informal salutation, ‘Hey man’ (line 1) underlines the close relationship he has with his friend, making the sensitive topic easier to broach and softening any potential discomfort. The declarative sentence ‘I’m sorry to hear about your job’ (lines 1–2) provides empathetic acknowledgment, steering the conversation towards emotional support. This support is furthered through the use of the slang term ‘sucks’ (line 3) and the expression ‘I know how you feel’ (lines 7–8), which offer shared understanding in a casual and non-judgemental manner. These linguistic features ultimately operate to enhance trust and openness between the two communicators. Similarly, the informal term of address ‘bro’ (line 13) adds personal intimacy to the conversation, aiding in the discussion of the sensitive topic and enhancing the friend’s feelings of support, thereby maintaining and strengthening their rapport. Imperative sentences such as ‘yell out if you need anything’ (lines 13–14) and ‘I’m here for you man’ (lines 14–15) also work to subtly address the job loss and shift the conversation towards friendship and support. Overall, Deng’s use of informal language not only maintains a comfortable discussion with his friend, but also promotes social harmony. It further strengthens their relationship by demonstrating Deng’s intent to act on his expressed empathy.

Introductory sentence states the purpose of the informal language: to negotiate a social taboo and build rapport between friends.

Appropriate metalanguage used in identifying informal language features.

Provides evidence from the text that demonstrates negotiation of a social taboo and the fostering of cooperation and rapport.

Analyses how the informal language features offer empathetic support, convey understanding, establish emotional connection and maintain rapport in a conversation about a social taboo.

Summarises how the use of informal language strengthens the relationship.

Supporting in-group membership

Informal language plays a crucial role in promoting and supporting **in-group membership**. An ‘in-group’ is a social group with which a person identifies as a member, such as a peer group, a club, a family, a community or even a workplace team. The language used within these groups often differs from the language used in other social contexts.

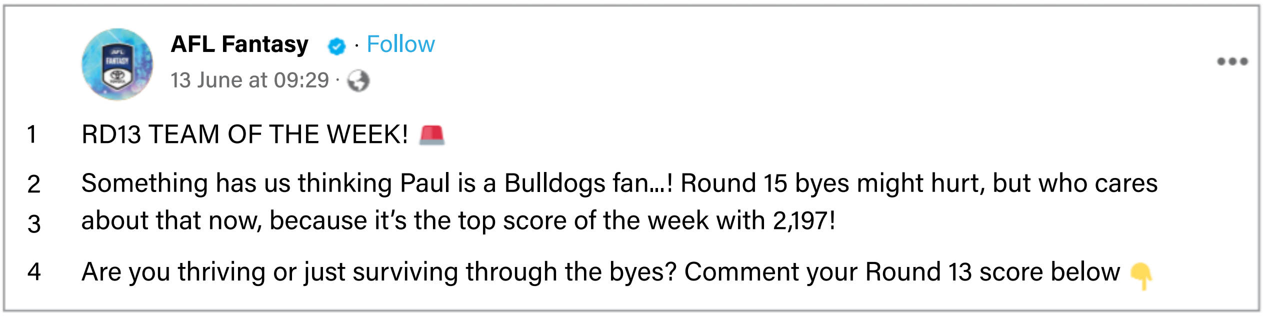
One of the main ways informal language promotes in-group membership is through shared understanding and mutual recognition. Specific slang, nicknames and in-jokes are often unique to the communication of a particular group, and serve to reinforce group identity and belonging. For this reason, once a community’s slang terms become widely understood, they tend to fall out of use and are replaced by newer alternatives. Additionally, language features used to include members in the ‘in-group’ can simultaneously exclude those who are in the ‘out-group’. Context-specific graphemes, particularly, can serve to prevent those who do not understand the language feature from participating in a particular group.

Furthermore, the use of informal language can minimise social distance and hierarchies within a group. Unlike formal language, which can sometimes create or reinforce power differences, informal language often conveys equality and camaraderie among members. By communicating informally, group members can build stronger relationships and foster a sense of belonging and togetherness. Informal language can also reflect the group’s norms, values and culture. This is often through the expression of shared experiences, perspectives and worldviews, which further reinforce in-group membership. Thus, group members not only use informal language to communicate information but also to identify and relate to the group's unique social and cultural identity.

Worked example

The following is a post from the AFL Fantasy Facebook page. This page is for fans of the Australian Football League (AFL) who follow the official online fantasy sports game known as *AFL Fantasy*. *AFL Fantasy* allows fans to assemble their own team of real-life AFL players, then earn points based on those players' actual performance in the AFL.

Consider the analysis of informal language use in supporting in-group membership.



AFL Fantasy · Follow
13 June at 09:29 ·

1 RD13 TEAM OF THE WEEK! 🚨

2 Something has us thinking Paul is a Bulldogs fan...! Round 15 byes might hurt, but who cares
3 about that now, because it's the top score of the week with 2,197!

4 Are you thriving or just surviving through the byes? Comment your Round 13 score below 👇

Source: AFL Fantasy, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=944072067019259&set=a.939560170803782

The AFL Fantasy Facebook post employs informal language to support a sense of in-group membership, effectively resonating with its specific audience – the fans of the Australian Football League (AFL) and fantasy sports enthusiasts. The post contains abbreviations and nouns relevant to the AFL context, for instance, 'RD13 TEAM OF THE WEEK' (line 1) and 'Round 15 byes' (line 2). These examples of language are known to *AFL Fantasy* players and presumes knowledge of the game, thus creating a sense of in-group membership. Another example of presumed knowledge is evident in the exclamative 'Something has us thinking Paul is a Bulldogs fan...!' (line 2). Only those familiar with *AFL Fantasy* would understand this reference in the context of the online community. Furthermore, the interrogative 'Are you thriving or just surviving through the byes?' (line 4), the imperative 'Comment your Round 13 score below' (line 4) and the pointing finger down emoji (line 4), directly engage with the audience and foster a sense of community through calling them to reflect on the message of the post and act on it. Overall, the post's informal language resonates with *AFL Fantasy* players and reinforces the sense of in-group membership through shared language that speaks to members of the online group.

Introductory sentence identifies the subject of analysis and establishes the purpose of the language – to foster a sense of in-group membership and resonate with the specific audience.

Identifies informal language devices with metalanguage.

References specific evidence from the text that establishes a sense of in-group membership.

Analyses how in-group membership is established through presumed knowledge.

Affirms that the post's informal language reinforces the sense of in-group membership among the online group members.

Develop your understanding 4.5

In the following transcript, friends Emily (E), Linette (L) and Ashwini (A) discuss their experiences of having completed a School Assessed Coursework (SAC) task for a Year 12 subject.

E: So= did anyone else totally bomb out on question four?
Like seriously (.) I had no idea how to answer it.
L: Oh my god/
A: Yeah me too/
E: What are we going to do? If that sort of question is on the end of year exam (..)
I think I'll freak.
A: We'll be right\
There's plenty of time to learn it (.) Don't stre=ss.
L: Yeah (.) Ashwini's right/
I've got heaps of notes we can work through together.
E: Really?
Do you think we can get together and help each other?
L: We all have a free period at the same time/
Let's use it for good.
E: [@@@]
A: [@@@]

1 Annotate the transcript by identifying informal language that encourages a sense of belonging within the group.

2 Using your annotations, write an analytical paragraph that explains how this informal language specifically contributes to the fostering of in-group membership.

Promoting linguistic innovation

Linguistic innovation refers to the manipulation of language to create variations of language features, giving rise to new words, phrases, pronunciations or meanings that reflect changing cultural and societal trends. The spontaneous and casual nature of informal language promotes linguistic innovation, as individuals have the opportunity to play with language in a way that is not encouraged in more formal contexts.

In **spoken conversation**, particularly, the immediacy of dialogue fosters an environment where participants can be imaginative and creative with their use of language. Speakers are more easily able to spontaneously play with language – creating new slang, using wordplay, making new speech sounds and more – to better express the purpose of their communication and their personal and social identity. Linguistic innovation in speech can also be used to foster intimacy and solidarity. This is because there is an underlying shared understanding of how new language features contribute to a sense of unity among participants.

Informal texts sent through SMS or other **instant messaging** mediums also provide a common ground for linguistic innovation. The limited space, conversational style and real-time communication encourage the use of abbreviations, emojis and other creative language forms. Because messaging applications can allow people to communicate over long distances in a style that imitates conversational speech, linguistic innovation can travel globally either through individual text chains or through large group messaging formats such as Discord servers.

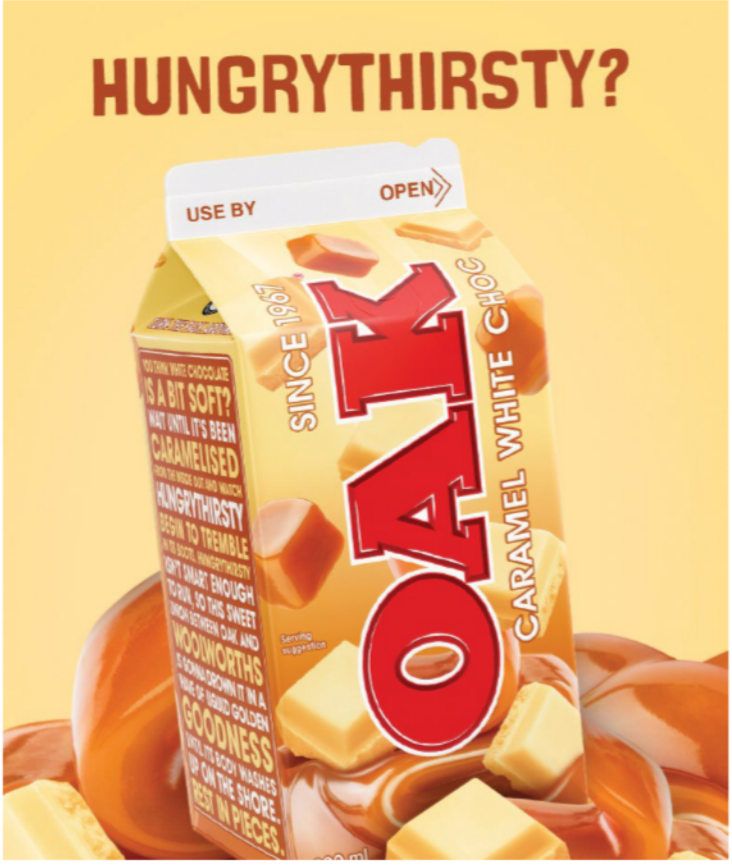
Social media platforms similarly play a significant role in promoting linguistic innovation for informal texts. The casual style of communication on these platforms promotes linguistic playfulness and experimentation, slang, abbreviations and neologisms, all of which foster creativity and the emergence of new language patterns. Furthermore, the availability of language-play tools – such as hashtags, memes and emojis – allows for the creation of inventive content that combines text, images, videos and audio. Staying up to date with the rate of language innovation on social media requires active engagement, continuous exposure to diverse online communities and a willingness to adapt and learn new linguistic forms. It's a dynamic and ever-changing landscape, making it challenging to keep pace with the constant evolution of language.

Linguistic innovation can also be seen in **advertising** as it seeks to engage the audience and differentiate brands. Advertising involves creating memorable catchphrases or slogans, introducing unique brand names or coined terms, incorporating cultural references and employing creative wordplay and humour. Through this, linguistic innovation allows companies to convey persuasive messages and create memorable experiences that resonate with consumers in the competitive advertising landscape.

Language innovations that meet communication needs, align with cultural trends, gain support from influential individuals or communities, and are easy to understand and remember are more likely to gain widespread usage; in contrast, those that don't meet these criteria or lose relevance may quickly fade away.

Worked example

The following is an advertisement for the milk brand OAK. Consider the worked example analysing the linguistic innovation of ‘hungrythirsty?’ as an effective marketing campaign slogan.


HUNGRYTHIRSTY?
USE BY
OPEN
SINCE 1957
OAK
CARAMEL WHITE CHOC
YOU THINK WHITE CHOCOLATE IS A BIT SOFT? WAIT UNTIL IT'S BEEN CARAMELISED FROM THE INSIDE OUT AND WATCH HUNGRYTHIRSTY BEGIN TO TREMBLE
ISN'T SMART ENOUGH TO RUN, SO THIS SWEET UNION BETWEEN OAK AND WOOLWORTHS IS GONNA DROWN IT IN A WAVE OF LIQUID GOLDEN GOODNESS UNTIL ITS BODY WASHES UP ON THE SHORE. REST IN PIECES.
Serving suggestion

Source: OAK, https://www.facebook.com/oakmilk/photos/a.181696118556683/4955914727801441/

‘Hungrythirsty?’ is an example of language innovation that combines two distinct concepts to create a unique and catchy campaign name for advertising ‘Caramel White Choc’ OAK milk. The slogan ‘hungrythirsty’ compounds the lexemes ‘hungry’ and ‘thirsty’ to attract consumers who may be craving both food and beverage satisfaction. Furthermore, the accompanying question mark conveys a sense of indecision for its audience, reflecting that this product appeals to those who are feeling that their appetite is slightly unfulfilled, but not enough to require a full meal.

Through the compounding of these words and accompanying punctuation mark, ‘hungrythirsty?’ creates a memorable and attention-grabbing slogan that immediately conveys the product’s nature and value. This linguistic innovation stands out among milk brand alternatives as it captures the essence of catering to both hunger and thirst, making it an effective branding strategy that resonates with consumers.

Introduces the brand name ‘OAK’ and identifies its slogan ‘hungrythirsty?’ as an example of language innovation.

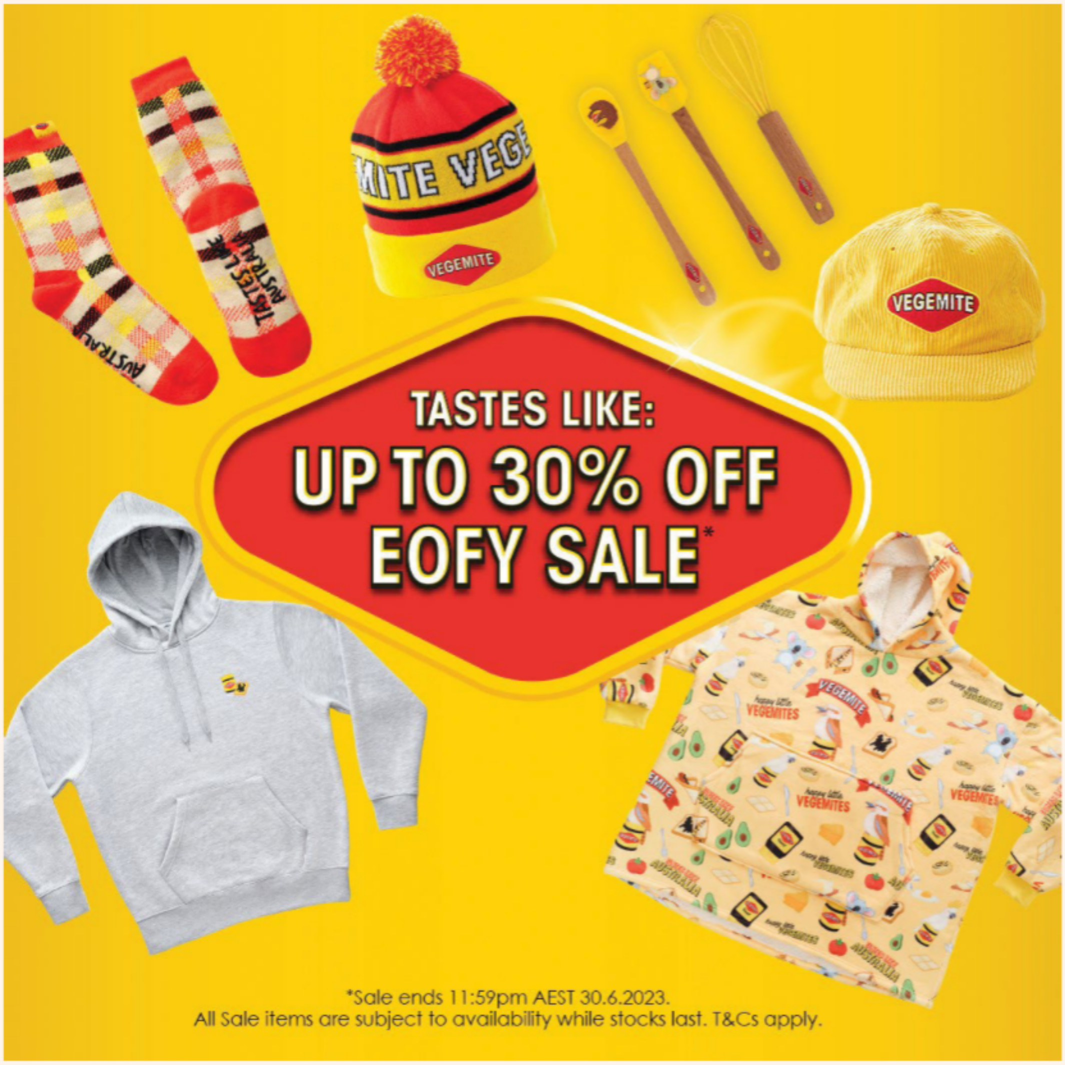
Explains the impact or effect of the compounding and punctuation mark inclusion.

Highlights the overall effect of this linguistic innovation in the context of an advertisement strategy.

Develop your understanding 4.6

The following is an advertisement that appeared on the Vegemite Instagram page. It contains the initialism 'EOFY', standing for 'End Of Financial Year'. EOFY is typically used in marketing to signify promotions or sales that align with the end of the fiscal year.

Write a brief analysis of the way that Vegemite uses linguistic innovation in this advertisement to promote the sales of Vegemite-branded apparel.


TASTES LIKE AUSTRALIA
MITE VEGE
VEGEMITE
VEGEMITE
TASTES LIKE:
UP TO 30% OFF
EOFY SALE*
*Sale ends 11:59pm AEST 30.6.2023.
All Sale items are subject to availability while stocks last. T&Cs apply.

Source: VEGEMITE, https://www.instagram.com/p/CttCfh9tMNh/?igshid=MWZjMTM2ODFkZg==

CHAPTER

05

Informal language and discourse

In this chapter, we delve into informal spoken discourse, exploring its distinct features and strategies, as well as the underlying factors that contribute to cohesion and coherence. Unlike formal discourse, informal communication thrives on spontaneity, authenticity and a relaxed approach that mirrors everyday conversation. This chapter develops your understanding of the dynamics typical of informal communication, providing insights into how people naturally interact and express themselves.

Key knowledge covered:

- features of spoken discourse in creating informal texts
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in informal texts

Features of spoken discourse in informal texts

Informal spoken discourse is often characterised by its spontaneous, dynamic and casual nature, reflecting the genuine and unscripted interactions that occur in everyday life. Unlike formal spoken discourse, which may be planned and rehearsed, informal speech embraces the natural ebb and flow of conversation. Although these features are typical of spoken texts, some written texts such as online or text message conversations imitate spoken texts, and so may incorporate some of these features too.

This casual style of communication is rich with various features that contribute to the authenticity and relatability of the dialogue. Consequently, these elements define the essence of informal spoken discourse, shaping and reflecting the ways people interact during conversations.

→ See pages 12–17 to view explanations of spoken discourse features, with accompanying examples.

Openings

Openings are how speakers begin a conversation, and these set the topic of the exchange. While in formal contexts, openings tend to follow a more scripted and expected structure, in informal contexts openings can be much more unprompted and varied. Informal contexts allow for dynamic conversation with fewer constraints on conventions, so speakers may play with how they use openings, such as by catching someone's attention with a nickname or shared slang, or forgoing traditional openings altogether.

Example

BESTIE! How was your weekend?

Closings

Closings are how speakers signal that a conversation is finishing. Much like openings, informal closings are often varied and participant-specific. For example, friends may say goodbye with casual phrases or an inside joke.

Example

Okie dokes, I'll catch ya later.

Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pairs are sets of phrases that come one after the other. They typically consist of questions and answers, or greetings and responses. In informal contexts, they are often used to build rapport between participants by ensuring that other participants are included and valued in the conversation. Adjacency pairs can also be used to repair any issues that may have arisen in the conversation, protecting politeness and meeting participants' face needs.

Example

Friend 1: You gonna go to Laur's party? (question)

Friend 2: Yep, can't wait. (answer)

Minimal responses / backchannels

Minimal responses or **backchannels** are short utterances and cues that are used by a listener in a conversation to acknowledge the speaker without taking the floor. They are prevalent in informal discourse, as their purpose is to maintain conversation flow, signal understanding or show active engagement and interest. They often reflect the listener's agreement, support and enthusiasm for the topic at hand, and can take the form of emotive responses like laughter, or even non-verbal features like shared smiling.

Example

Friend 1: So I said to him ...

Friend 2: Yeah?

Friend 1: Not a hope in hell!

Overlapping speech

Overlapping speech occurs when multiple participants speak at the same time, and can be either cooperative or uncooperative. Cooperative overlaps are more common in informal contexts, as the participants typically have a reduced social distance and are speaking from a more equal status. They are often used to indicate excitement or agreement, as a way of meeting participants' face needs. In contrast, uncooperative overlaps are used for the purpose of disrupting the communication, and often reflect disregard for the other speaker.

Example

Dad: I reckon we should get pizza tonight.
Daughter: hmmm
Dad: How about GYG [instead?]
Daughter: [Yes!]

Discourse markers/particles

Discourse markers or **particles** are linguistic units that speakers use to organise and maintain the flow of conversation, but which have very little meaning on their own. There are various discourse markers – for example, 'well', 'like', 'so', 'anyway' and 'you know' – and they serve different purposes depending on the context in which they are used. They are commonly found in informal contexts, as they allow speakers time to organise their thoughts during unplanned conversation. Other purposes may include emphasising a point, indicating uncertainty, expressing personal opinions and managing topics.

Examples

So, I was like at that place that serves up the gigantic parmas.

Anyway, I saw Pete.

Non-fluency features

Non-fluency features are linguistic features which impact on a text's clarity, such as **pauses**, **filled pauses / voice hesitations**, **false starts**, **repetition** and **repairs**. Non-fluency features are typical of spontaneous and informal speech, often signalling a lack of planning and preparedness, as speakers formulate their speech on the spot. They can also be used by speakers as a method of 'holding the floor'; that is, to make sure their conversational turn is maintained while they think of their next statement, rather than another speaker taking over.

Examples

I think (.) maybe (.) we should try this place (.) spot for dinner? (pauses)

Um what was I saying? We should go to= ahh= Damo's? (filled pauses / voiced hesitations)

Gimme the pe- tex- writing thingy there! (false starts)

No way she said she said that! (repetition)

I'll see you on Friday—I mean Saturday. (repair)

Worked example

Consider the analysis of discourse features in the following transcript, a conversation between good friends, A and B.

1 A: Hey, have you been keeping up with all that climate change stuff [on the news?]
2 B: [Yeah, it's]
3 getting hot in here, [if you] ask me.
4 A: [hmm/]
5 We gotta do our bit, you know\
6 B: <A Speaking of doing our bit, A>
7 did you ever chat to your neighbour about his backyard burn-offs?
8 A: Uh (.) we=ll (.) I've been meaning to (…) but it's a bit awkward, isn't it?
9 B: Yeah, fair call\

In this informal conversation, both speakers A and B share control of the floor, reflecting an equal and relaxed relationship. The conversation opens with A's casual greeting, 'Hey, have you been keeping up with all that climate change stuff [on the news?]' (line 1) and an overlapping response from B, '[Yeah, it's]' (line 2). This overlapping speech is not perceived as a face-threatening act but adds to the lively and spontaneous feel of the conversation, indicating active engagement and agreement.

The adjacency pairs, such as A's question about climate change and B's answer, demonstrate the cooperative nature of the conversation. A's use of the discourse particle 'you know' (line 5) guides the conversation and reflects shared understanding between the friends. Voiced hesitations, such as A's 'Uh, well,' (line 8), along with the pauses, reflect the unplanned nature of the conversation and the speakers' comfort in expressing themselves without rehearsed precision. These non-fluency features add authenticity to the exchange, allowing a moment for the speakers to gather their thoughts. A's minimal response, 'hmm' (line 4) acknowledges B's playful response to their question about climate change. Overall, this conversation between A and B exemplifies the characteristics of informal spoken discourse, where the rules are less rigid, and the interaction is guided by social cues, shared understanding and personal relationships. The features of spoken discourse reflect the dynamics typical of informal communication, where A and B are at ease with each other, and the conversation flows naturally.

Sets the context for the analysis.

Uses appropriate metalanguage and provides an example of the discourse feature being discussed.

Provides analysis that explains the effect of the features.

Sums up the analysis by summarising the overall characteristics of the discourse, while connecting this specific conversation to broader characteristics of informal communication.

Develop your understanding 5.1

Read the following transcript of a conversation between friends, A and B.

1	A:	Hey man (.) ever tried potato cakes?
2	B:	Yeah (.) they're so= good/
3		You?
4	A:	Duh (.) of course (..) do you like a thick batter <A or a thin one? A>
5	B:	I'm pretty much up for any kind\
6	A:	What about sausage rolls?
7	B:	Absolutely/
8		I reckon the homemade ones are the best.
9		You too?
10	A:	Yeah-nah (.) absolutely.
11		Wanna come to mine soon?
12		We could do a taste test of a bunch of diff@@erent sau@@sage rolls/ [@@@]
13	B:	[@@@]
14		Sounds goo=d/
15		When are you thinking?
16	A:	Um (.) what about next (...) Saturday? Does that suit you?
17	B:	Sounds like a plan (.) See you then/
18	A:	Can't wait (.) See you then/
19	B:	Catch ya/
20	A:	Catch ya/

1 Annotate the transcript for features of spoken discourse.
   - a openings
   - b closings
   - c adjacency pairs
   - d minimal responses / backchannels
   - e overlapping speech
   - f discourse markers/particles
   - g non-fluency features

2 Write a brief analysis on the function of each feature in the conversation.

Discourse strategies and cooperation in informal texts

Discourse strategies are frequently employed to allow participants to converse with one another cooperatively. In informal contexts, discourse strategies are often more fluid and flexible, shifting to meet the participants' needs as conversation flows. They are also highly linked with politeness, as most discourse strategies function to ensure a harmonious conversation, where participants feel as though they are equals and that their thoughts, feelings and opinions have value.

→ See pages 18–20 to view explanations of discourse strategies.

Topic management

In informal spoken texts, **topic management** is characterised by a fluid approach, with implicit negotiation between speakers. Topics emerge from participants' mutual interests and hobbies, prior knowledge and personal experiences, as well as current events. As conversations unfold, participants may naturally shift or introduce new topics, reflecting the relaxed nature of informal communication. The way topics are managed can reveal the relationship and familiarity between the speakers, with seamless shifts from one topic to another.

Turn-taking

Turn-taking in informal discourse is free-flowing and adaptable, as participants engage with one another in a less structured context. This relaxed atmosphere permits more casual use of imperatives and interrogatives, and the roles of the speakers are less rigidly defined. Turn-taking can also manifest in overlapping speech, a frequent occurrence in casual conversations. While a social rule of speech is 'one speaker at a time', authentic informal exchanges often include overlaps as these indicate active engagement, enthusiasm and collaboration.

The tenor of the discourse, or the relationship between the speakers, is also evident in turn-taking. The informal and friendly manner in which turns are taken can reveal much about the social roles and personal attitudes of the participants, emphasising the camaraderie and familiarity that characterise their interaction.

Management of repair sequences

Repair sequences are common in informal and casual conversations due to their spontaneous and unplanned nature. Repairs occur when speakers adjust their statements or clarify their intended meaning in real time, often in response to immediate feedback from the listener. The relaxed nature of the exchange makes speakers more comfortable making errors, clarifying thoughts or accepting repairs offered by others. Furthermore, the collaborative aspect of informal communication also tends towards cooperation to construct meaning, making repair sequences more common.

Code switching

In informal contexts, **code switching** is often used to indicate group membership and close social distance. Choosing to switch between languages participants have in common can indicate a shared cultural or linguistic background. This can strengthen social bonds, convey solidarity and differentiate the group from others.

Tip

When analysing informal conversations, observe how speakers introduce new topics, overlap and make on-the-go repairs to guide the interaction. These elements highlight the cooperative and spontaneous nature of informal discourse, reflecting rapport and shared understanding between speakers.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of discourse strategies used in the following transcript of a conversation between two friends, Denise (D) and Shana (S), who work together in the same office.

D walks into the room
1 D: It's toasty in here.
2 S: I know (.) I just turned it down\
3 D: Twenty is too low\
4 S: You think?
5 I'm sweating in here.
6 D: Just because you're a personal (.) hot (.) water bottle do[esn't m]ean we all are/
7 S: [@@@]
8 Ok fine (.) twenty-two then.
S changes the temperature on the heater
9 D: Thanks/
10 S: No worries.
11 (...)
12 D: Hey (.) didya read the news this morning?
13 S: I know right/
14 Interest rates again\ (.)
15 I'm already (.) bloody (.) broke enough.
16 D: Tell me about it/
17 we've had to cut back on (.) like (.) pretty much everything\
18 S: Yep (.) no more gym for me\

19 and now we just have Netflix\
20 I cancelled Binge, Disney and (.) um (.) you know (.) that Amazon one/
21 D: Prime?
22 S: Yeah, Prime\
23 D: Ugh, first world problems though right?
24 S: @@@@ Totally.

The discourse strategies used in the informal conversation between Denise and Shana reflect their close relationship. During the exchange, Denise and Shana take equal turns, with frequent back-and-forth interaction. Denise's use of the interjection 'Hey' (line 12) acts like a discourse particle, indicating a change in topic. Denise's choice to begin a turn occurs in response to the longer silence on line 11 and demonstrates a cooperative exchange. Similarly, the speakers' relationship is demonstrated through a backchannel when Shana laughs (line 7) while Denise 'accuses' her of being a 'personal hot water bottle' (line 6). While accusations are potentially face-threatening, Shana's laughter indicates agreement and close rapport, as Shana is not offended. The backchannel also signifies cooperation, as Shana has no intention to take the floor from Denise. Thus, the tenor of the conversation, evident in the casual and familiar way Denise and Shana manage turn-taking, emphasises their close relationship and shared understanding. The use of repair sequences within the conversation reflects the spontaneous nature of the interaction. Shana's substitution when describing the Amazon Prime streaming service as 'that Amazon one' (line 20), after prefacing it with the discourse particle 'you know', allows Denise to use an other-initiated repair sequence, as she repairs Shana's substitution with 'Prime?' (line 21). The use of questioning intonation allows for Shana to complete the repair sequence with the affirmation and agreement on line 22, 'Yeah, Prime'. Here, both participants in the repair sequence are supportive, relying on one another for information, which further demonstrates their close bond.

Sets the context for the analysis.

Using appropriate metalanguage, provides examples of discourse strategies in the conversation.

Explains how the discourse strategies build cooperation and rapport between the speakers.

Explains the role of turn-taking in signalling tenor.

Develop your understanding 5.2

Read the following transcript of a conversation between workmates Elise (E) and Kyle (K), who are working a particularly busy shift in a clothing store. Answer the questions that follow.

E:	It's insanely busy today\
K:	I reckon (.) I've had no time to get a drink of water or go to the toilet even\
E:	That's no good\
K:	You had a break yet?
	You look like you're dead on your feet/
E:	Tell me what you really think.
	I thought I was looking [hot]
K:	[@@@]
	<A Oh my god I'm so sorry\ A>
	<F I'm so ↑ rude ↑ F>
E:	@@@ Nah you're all good\
	You know I love your honesty\
K:	And subtlety?
E:	Yeah (.) you're as subtle as a sledgehammer [@@@]
K:	[@@@]
E:	Hey (.) do you know if we have any of those tops left/
	you know (.) the ones we had in the window?
K:	The he- I mean (.) halter one in green?
E:	Yeah (.) that's the one\
K:	Um (...) I don't think so <A I reckon we sold the last one on Saturday. A>

1. How do Elise and Kyle manage topics during their conversation? Provide examples.
2. Identify a moment where the speakers naturally shift from one topic to another. What does this reveal about their relationship?
3. Give an example of backchannelling in the conversation between Elise and Kyle. How does this reflect their engagement in the conversation?
4. How do the speakers in this conversation demonstrate a close tenor through their turn-taking? Provide specific examples.
5. Identify a repair sequence in the conversation. How does this reflect the spontaneous nature of their exchange?

Discourse factors and cohesion and coherence in informal texts

Cohesion and **coherence** are essential components in both formal and informal communication, shaping the way ideas are connected and understood. In informal contexts, these factors are applied in a way that reflects the more relaxed and personal nature of the interaction.

→ See pages 5–11 to see explanations of cohesion and coherence.

Factors that contribute to a text's cohesion in informal texts

Cohesion in informal texts can manifest in various ways, from lexical choices that include slang and colloquial language, to the use of ellipsis or substitution. Words and phrases that link clauses, occur in pairs or refer to other terms further contribute to the cohesive nature of informal texts. The following table explores some of the common cohesive factors in informal texts, illustrating how they create a text that is both engaging and meaningful.

Cohesion factor	Informal text presentation
Lexical choice	A shared informal vocabulary employed through synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and hypernymy, such as with the use of slang and colloquial language.
Collocation	Employing informal collocations, such as strongly associated idioms and fixed phrases.
Information flow	The flexible and variable exchanging of information, due to the spontaneous nature of informal communication.
Referencing	Personal pronouns and demonstratives being used anaphorically and deictically. Additionally, speakers and writers sometimes use cataphoric referencing as a repair in informal contexts.
Repetition	May be consciously used to strengthen or sustain a main point or argument, or unintentionally used as result of spontaneous speech.
Substitution	The substitution of pronouns such as 'one' and 'some' for noun phrases, to avoid repetition.
Ellipsis	The use of ellipsis when a word or phrase is assumed to be understood in context, to avoid repetition.
Conjunctions	Conjunctions may be used to begin sentences, which is generally avoided in more formal writing.
Adverbials	Used to link relevant information together, improving clarity and flow for an audience.

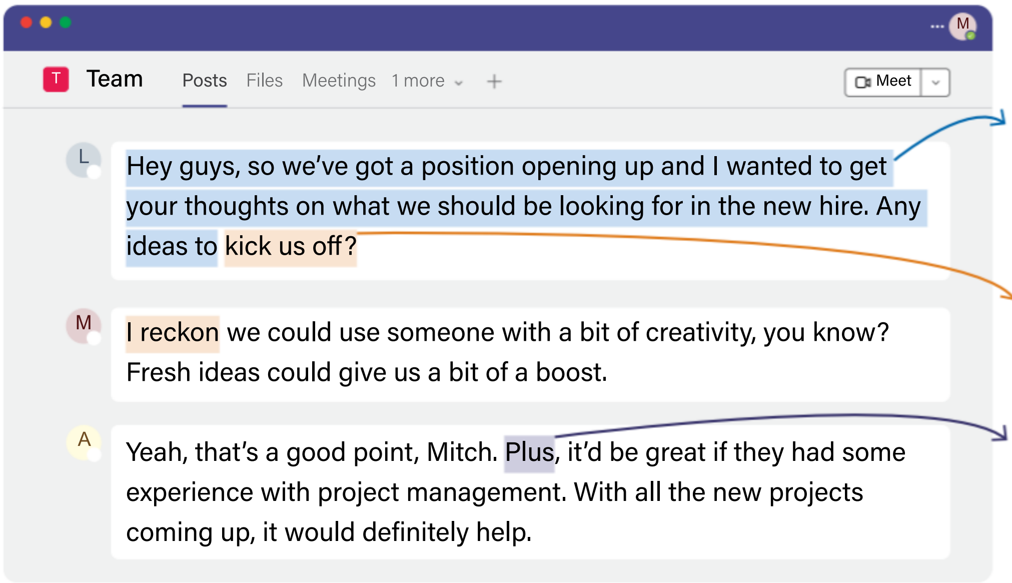
Factors that contribute to a text's coherence in informal texts

Coherence is achieved in informal texts through inference, formatting and consistency. It can also include the more conversational ordering of information, where topics shift back and forth naturally. The flouting of conventional writing rules can also enhance the informal style, creating a text that resonates with a specific audience or reflects a shared understanding. The table below explores common ways in which coherence factors occur in informal texts, including how this compares to more formal texts.

Coherence factor	Informal text presentation
Cohesion	All of the elements in the 'Cohesion factor' table on the previous page can also contribute to informal elements of coherence.
Inference	Relying on the listener's ability to infer meaning based on shared knowledge, assumptions or context. There is a greater use of slang, idiomatic expressions and cultural references.
Logical ordering	A more conversational and less rigid structure in the ordering of information. It is more acceptable to jump between topics or introduce ideas spontaneously.
Formatting	Using less conventional formatting, such as shorter paragraphs, bullet points, more casual and playful fonts and colours, and use of emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes.
Consistency	More flexibility in consistency of tense, sentence structures, and morphological features such as contractions and abbreviations.
Conventions	Reduced rigidity and flouting of rules when applying conventions in texts. Writers and speakers may end sentences with prepositions or use excessive or minimal punctuation.

Worked example

The following transcript is of an online chat between a team of workers, Mitch (M), Adelina (A) and Jashan (J), and their manager, Linuki (L). Consider the annotations of discourse factors that create textual cohesion and coherence.



L: Hey guys, so we've got a position opening up and I wanted to get your thoughts on what we should be looking for in the new hire. Any ideas to kick us off?

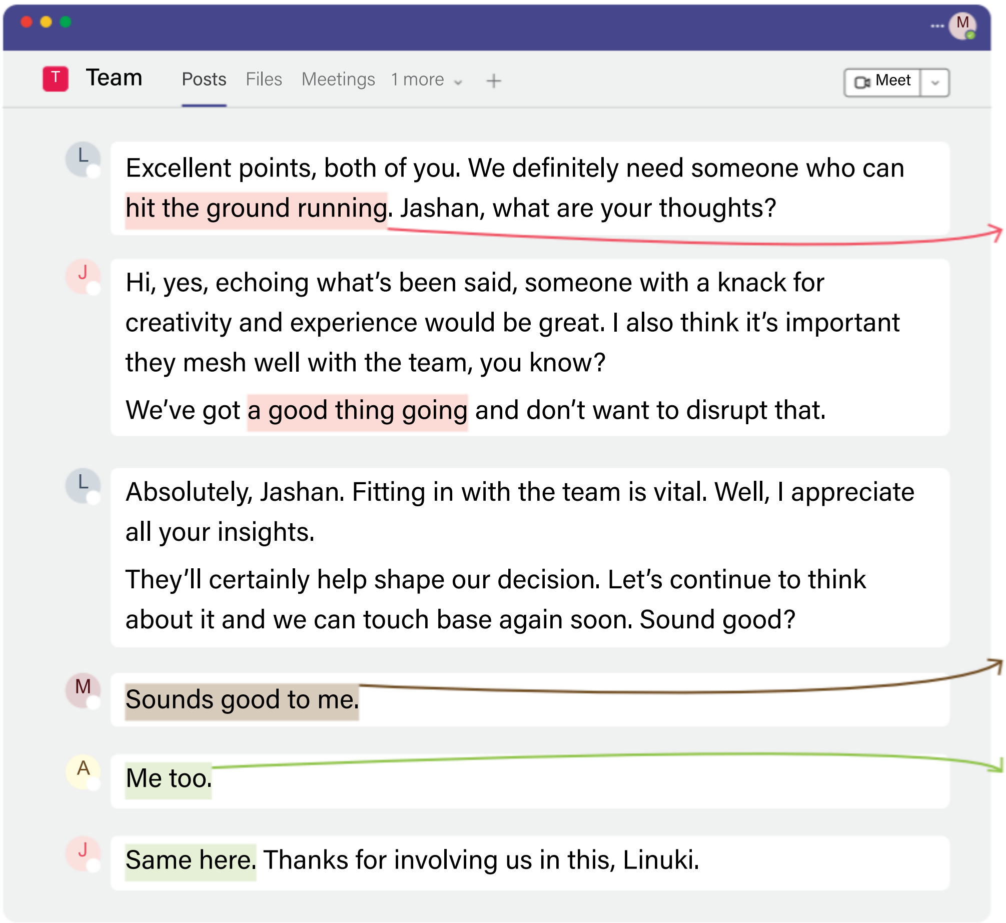
M: I reckon we could use someone with a bit of creativity, you know? Fresh ideas could give us a bit of a boost.

A: Yeah, that's a good point, Mitch. Plus, it'd be great if they had some experience with project management. With all the new projects coming up, it would definitely help.

Logical ordering of introducing the topic first encourages understanding among the team.

Shared informal language creates relaxed atmosphere.

Conjunction connects ideas and manages flow of coversation.



Excellent points, both of you. We definitely need someone who can hit the ground running. Jashan, what are your thoughts?

Hi, yes, echoing what's been said, someone with a knack for creativity and experience would be great. I also think it's important they mesh well with the team, you know?

We've got a good thing going and don't want to disrupt that.

Absolutely, Jashan. Fitting in with the team is vital. Well, I appreciate all your insights.

They'll certainly help shape our decision. Let's continue to think about it and we can touch base again soon. Sound good?

Sounds good to me.

Me too.

Same here. Thanks for involving us in this, Linuki.

Informal collocation increases cohesion.

Sentence fragment plays with formal writing conventions, reflecting the informal nature of the messages.

Ellipsis used, as context provides enough information.

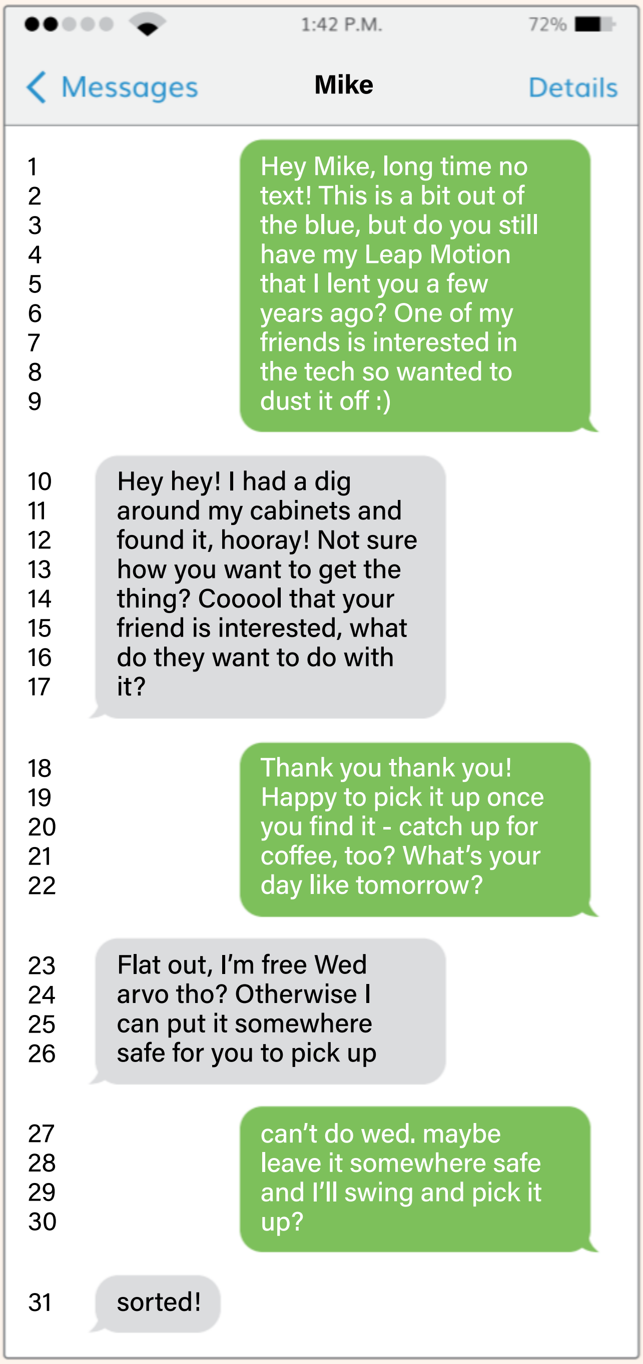
Develop your understanding 5.3

1 Read the following dialogue between the two speakers, then fill in the final column of the table on page 88. The first one has been completed for you.

1 Speaker 1: <F Woah F> (.) did you see that car?
2 It was hooning like crazy/
3 Speaker 2: Yeah (.) I saw/
4 The driver must be la=te for something\
5 Speaker 1: I wonder where they were rushing off to?
6 Speaker 2: No idea (.) but they almost took out that poor guy crossing the road.\
7 Speaker 1: Yikes (.) that's scary/
8 <P I hope they hit the brakes in time\ P>
9 Speaker 2: Yep (.) they stopped right in front of him\
10 Just gave him a little scare (.) I think.

Discourse factor	Examples	Explanation of role
Anaphoric reference	'It' (line 2) 'they' (line 5, 6, 8 and 9) 'him' (line 9 and 10)	Pronouns used to refer back to the car, the driver and the pedestrian, respectively. These help maintain the continuity of the conversation and keep the focus on the subjects being discussed.
Ellipsis	'Yeah I saw.' (line 3)	
Conjunctions	'but' (line 6) 'just' (line 10)	
Adjacency pairs	'Whoa did you see that car?' (line 1) 'Yeah I saw.' (line 3)	
Collocation	'crossing the road' (line 6) 'hit the brakes' (line 8)	
Logical ordering	observation of the car (lines 1–3) queries about the driver's motives (lines 4–5) discussion of the near accident (lines 6–10)	

2 Examine the following message exchange between friends. Identify the discourse factors that contribute to cohesion and coherence within the chat. Construct an analysis of your findings, focusing on how these specific discourse factors work together.



Hey Mike, long time no text! This is a bit out of the blue, but do you still have my Leap Motion that I lent you a few years ago? One of my friends is interested in the tech so wanted to dust it off :)

Hey hey! I had a dig around my cabinets and found it, hooray! Not sure how you want to get the thing? Cooool that your friend is interested, what do they want to do with it?

Thank you thank you! Happy to pick it up once you find it - catch up for coffee, too? What's your day like tomorrow?

Flat out, I'm free Wed arvo tho? Otherwise I can put it somewhere safe for you to pick up

can't do wed. maybe leave it somewhere safe and I'll swing and pick it up?

sorted!

CHAPTER
06

Analysing informal texts

During your study of English Language, you can be assessed through any one or a combination of the following tasks: a folio of annotated texts, an essay, an investigative report, an analytical commentary and short-answer questions. Refer to Chapter 18 on pages 219–43 to learn how to approach each of these tasks.

This chapter includes one written and one spoken text, and provides practice for each task, with a focus on Unit 3, Area of Study 1: Informality.

Essay topic

Write an essay that responds to the following essay question. Refer to the stimulus material provided.

Stimulus A

‘Text messaging has changed the way we communicate and while deep concerns have been expressed about how detrimental textspeak is to literacy and grammar, there is no real evidence to suggest that is the case … It has even been suggested that text messaging may in fact enrich literacy, rather than hinder it.’

Quote from Antonella Strambi, ‘Text messages and 😀🤣😍🤪😫 – do they enrich our language or denigrate it?’ University of South Australia, <https://www.unisa.edu.au/>, 18 August 2022

Stimulus B

‘Informal language is the playground of creativity; it liberates our thoughts, providing the freedom to explore, experiment and express without the confines of formal structures and rules.’

Overheard at a linguistics conference.

‘Informal language adds value to communication by injecting vibrancy, promoting creativity, cultivating a sense of fun and fostering authenticity.’

To what extent do you agree? Refer to at least two subsystems of language in your response.

Investigative report

Examine and analyse the degree of informality in language used across a variety of Australian online news websites. Develop a research question such as 'How is informal language used in online news websites in Australia, and what does this signify about changing communication norms?' Select data sources such as prominent Australian online news websites and choose articles published within a defined period of time (e.g. one month) for your analysis. Ensure you look at articles covering a variety of topics such as politics, lifestyle and sport.

Analyse the articles, identifying any patterns in the way each uses informal language. Construct a written report or equivalent presentation including an introduction, methodology, findings, analysis and conclusion. Reference any quotes or ideas using an appropriate citation style.

Annotating texts

Annotate the informal language features of **Text 1** (pages 92–3) or **Text 2** (page 93).

Short-answer questions

Refer to **Text 1** on pages 92–3 and answer the following questions.

1. Identify one function of the text. (1 mark)
2. Describe the register of the article. Provide two different examples of language features to support your response. (3 marks)
3. Explain how the repetition in lines 7 and 22 contributes to cohesion. (2 marks)
4. Explain how the intended audience influences the article's level of formality. Refer to at least two examples in your response. (4 marks)

Refer to **Text 2** on page 93 and answer the following questions.

1. Identify one purpose of the conversation. (1 mark)
2. Explain the function of the discourse marker 'anyway' in line 5. (2 marks)
3. How do the informal language features used by Gabby and Tae reflect their relationship? Refer to line numbers and use appropriate metalanguage in your response. (3 marks)
4. Explain the function of the non-fluency features employed by Gabby in lines 5 and 11. (4 marks)

Analytical commentary

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of **Text 1** (pages 92–3) or **Text 2** (page 93). Use appropriate metalanguage and include line numbers in your response. Consider the following:

- the register of the text, including the influence of tenor and audience
- the function/s and purpose/s of the text, and how this is achieved using informal language features
- how the situational and cultural contexts have informed the language features present
- how cohesion and coherence have been achieved using informal discourse features
- the role of spoken discourse strategies and features (Text 2).

Scan the code or click here to view answers to the short-answer questions and the analytical commentary.

Text 1

The following article, written by Mackenzie Pennycook, was published on PEDESTRIAN.TV on 3 July 2023. PEDESTRIAN.TV is an online news and entertainment publisher that targets a youthful audience. This article was published in the wake of the frenzied ticket sales for the Australian leg of Taylor Swift's global Eras Tour.

Here's just how much cash Taylor Swift will be raking in for the Aussie leg of her Eras Tour

Unless you've been living under a rock, the news of **Taylor Swift**'s Eras Tour hitting Aussie shores next February has been *everywhere* and the amount of dosh she's earning for her seven Aus shows was just revealed.

Perth Now reported that the global pop star would be earning a whopping $35 million for her seven show stint, working out to be an eye-watering $5 mil a show.

Swift is snubbing all but two of Australia's major cities, only heading to Melbourne and Sydney leaving Swifties across the rest of Australia forking out thousands just to see her.

Tour sources have revealed that the decision to stay on the southeast side of the country likely came straight from Taylor herself, *Perth Now* reported on Saturday.

"With big tours like this, the directive would come from the artist," an insider told the publication. "Taylor would have said, 'I only have time to do two cities. I don't have time to go around the country.' It's a directive that comes from the artist."

A third show in Melbourne and a fourth show in Sydney was announced mid last week after the absolute sh*tshow that was trying to secure Eras Tour tickets via Ticketek.

She will become the first artist since **Madonna** (!) to perform three consecutive concerts at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) when she takes the stage in February next year, and the first ever (!!) to play a fourth straight show at Sydney's Accor Stadium.

As one of the lucky ones to secure tickets to see Taylor Swift in Melbourne next year, I'd like to think that I played a part (albeit a small one) in blondie's totally bonkers salary. A three-hour show done entirely in heels? I'd want 5 mil a night, too.

Source: Mackenzie Pennycook, 'Here's just how much cash Taylor Swift will be raking in for the Aussie leg of her Eras Tour', *PEDESTRIAN.TV*, <https://www.pedestrian.tv/>, 3 July 2023

Text 2

The following text is a transcript of a conversation between friends Gabby (G) and Tae (T) as they eat lunch at school.

→ See page 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

T: Let's sit here\
I'm so hungry (.) that last class dragged on forever\
G: I could hea=r your stomach talking\ @@@
T: My stomach growls so= loudly <A it's so embarrassing. A>
G: Anyway (.) I finally caught up with Zoe (.) and you won't believe what she's done.
T: Oh my god tell me/
G: Her hair (.) Chopped (.) Completely <L gone/ L>
T: What no way/
G: I mean it was kind of a shock at first but <A it looks amazing. A>
T: Her beautiful long hair (.) I can't believe she was that brave/
G: She looks like that actor from the Hunger Games (.) um (..) you know/
when she got her hair cut really short/
T: Jennifer Lawrence?
G: Yeah that's her (.) She's got amazing [eyes].
T: [Eyes] @@@ jinx.
G: I'm thinking about getting my hair cut too= now that I've seen how good it looks on Zoe/
T: <A You should totally shave your head. A> (..) [@@@]
G: [@@@]
G: My mum would <F freak out\ F>
T: I'd love to do it but I reckon I've got a weird shaped head so it'd look (.) you know– (..)
G: Like an egg? [@@@]
T: [@@@]
T: You're so mean\ @@@

Language variation and purpose

UNIT 3

Area of Study 2: Formality

In Unit 3, Area of Study 2, we examine how writers and speakers use formal language to address different contexts and purposes.

The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- the role of Standard English in creating formal and informal texts
- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the influence of register, tenor and audience in formal texts
- the relationship between context and features of language in formal texts
- the features of formal writing and formal speech as represented in a range of texts
- features of spoken discourse in creating formal texts
- features in formal speech and writing
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the use of formal language for various purposes and intents
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in formal texts
- conventions for the transcription of spoken English texts, including symbols, legend and line numbers
- metalanguage to discuss formal language in texts

The key knowledge points ‘the features of formal writing and formal speech as represented in a range of texts’ and ‘metalanguage to discuss formal language in texts’ are covered throughout the chapters for this area of study. Chapter 7 explores the distinctive language features that contribute to a text’s formality, while Chapter 8 examines how these formal language features can be used to meet an author’s differing purposes and intents. Chapter 9 investigates formality in discourse, focusing primarily on the features and strategies that are unique to spoken texts.

This area of study requires you to identify, describe and analyse how and why formal language is used in a variety of contexts. Chapter 10 provides practice for each major assessment type you may face, with a focus on how formal language features and strategies are used by speakers and writers across different contexts.

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CHAPTER
07

Features of formal language

In this chapter, we explore some of the features that make up formal language. We investigate how subsystem patterning and rhetorical devices can influence a piece, and how jargon, euphemism, double speak and non-discriminatory language can manipulate the delivery of information to an audience. We consider the ways that these features manifest within formal contexts and how speakers and writers use them to reflect prestige, incite action, encourage social harmony or control transparency. Through examining these features, this chapter demonstrates the role that formal language plays within our broader social context.

Key knowledge covered:

- the relationship between context and features of language in formal texts
- features in formal speech and writing, including:
  - subsystem patterning
  - rhetoric
  - jargon
  - euphemism
  - double speak
  - non-discriminatory language

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Jargon	Technical or specialised terms used within a specific field.
Euphemism	Language that masks or mitigates a taboo or potentially offensive topic.
Double speak	Language that purposely obscures, obfuscates or hinders the meaning or intent of a statement.
Rhetoric	Informing, persuading and motivating a reader or listener into action that supports the viewpoint of the writer or speaker.
Non-discriminatory language	Language that focuses on creating inclusivity and equality, by avoiding prejudice and stereotyping.

Features of formal texts

Formal language features often originate from languages with high levels of prestige. Latin and French historically held prestige in fields such as law, education and government. The influence of these languages can be seen in English today, with many of their linguistic features considered to be formal. Formal language is more often used in formal or prestigious situations, in communications from governments or large organisations, or when participants are unfamiliar with each other and have a great degree of social distance. Some formal text types might include:

- speeches, including political speeches, debates, eulogies and lectures
- legal documents and news reports
- letters or emails from large institutional bodies
- professional communications, particularly between strangers
- literary works such as poems and novels.

Compared to informal texts, formal texts tend to be highly cohesive, have less reliance on the audience's prior knowledge, and be well-crafted and refined. Formal texts often use conventions of Standard English, and can have many purposes, depending on the context and the intentions of the writer or speaker. For example, the writer or speaker may wish to establish their expertise, promote social harmony or create ambiguity for their audience. Rather than working in isolation, key features of formal texts work together to achieve particular purposes. You will read more about the purposes of formal language in Chapter 8.

Some common features of formal language are provided below and on the following pages.

Subsystem patterning

In formal texts, **subsystem patterns** contribute to consistency, clarity and precision. They can help writers adhere to the formal style, enhance persuasiveness, reduce errors and ensure social and cultural appropriateness.

→ See pages 2–3, 4–5 and 23–5 to review subsystem patterning

Subsystem pattern	Examples of pattern	Function in formal texts
Phonological patterns alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, rhythm and rhyme	'In a summer season when soft was the sun' – William Langland (alliteration) Hazy shades of dappled light. (assonance) Send a tender kiss. (consonance) I heard the boom of the thunder as the storm passed overhead. (onomatopoeia)	In formal texts, phonological patterning may show an element of planning and consideration. This is particularly evident in literature or other carefully crafted texts, such as political speeches.

Morphological patterns affixation, abbreviation, shortening, compounding, blending, backformation, conversion of word class, initialism, acronym and contraction	The star was polluted by circumstellar material (affixation) The temperature tomorrow will be 15°C (abbreviation) Batteries not incl. (shortening) A new biomarker may aid in the early detection of Alzheimer's disease. (blending) Would you like me to calendar that meeting? (conversion of word class)	Morphological patterning can be used in formal contexts to address new ideas or inventions in society. It can also emphasise the seriousness of a situation, or engage an audience with specific knowledge.
Syntactic patterns antithesis, listing and parallelism	We are going to plan for the worst, but hope for the best. (antithesis) We have seen an increase in customer uptake, stock prices and profits. (listing) I cannot condone this, and I cannot allow this to continue. (parallelism)	Syntactic patterns can be used in formal language to provide clarity or emphasis to arguments. They can also be used for rhetorical effect.
Semantic patterns figurative language, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, simile, hyperbole, personification, animation, puns and lexical ambiguity	Australia is a melting pot of cultures. (metaphor) Our recipe is an open secret. (oxymoron) She was as forceful as waves crashing on the beach. (simile) Time galloped away from us and, before we knew it, it was August. (animation)	Semantic patterning allows shared connections to be drawn to abstract concepts. In the political arena, semantic patterning can craft a shared bias or manipulate an audience.

Tip

When analysing a pattern in a text, you should state what the feature is and refer to an example, then explain how the pattern works and why it has been included by the author or speaker.

Worked example

Consider the annotations analysing the role of subsystem patterns in this formal text discussing the cryptocurrency bitcoin.

Bitcoin, a prominent cryptocurrency, represents an astronomical innovation in the financial sector, fundamentally changing how society views legal tender. As the first decentralised digital currency, it operates on a peer-to-peer network, utilising blockchain technology to record transactions. Known as BTC, bitcoin has paved the way for a new era of financial exchange, strengthening individuals, fostering innovation and eliminating inefficiency. BTC boldly breaks the boundaries of traditional financial systems.

Semantic patterning: hyperbole of 'astronomical innovation' exaggerates the influence of bitcoin, generating excitement.

Morphological patterning: identifying the abbreviation of bitcoin as 'BTC' demonstrates knowledge of the topic.

Semantic patterning: metaphor of 'paved the way' is used to encourage the audience to think of bitcoin as progressive and beneficial.

Phonological patterning: alliteration in 'BTC boldly breaks … boundaries', where the initial /b/ phoneme creates a striking finishing statement about bitcoin's role in society today.

Syntactic patterning: listing is used to convince the audience that bitcoin has multiple benefits.

Develop your understanding 7.1

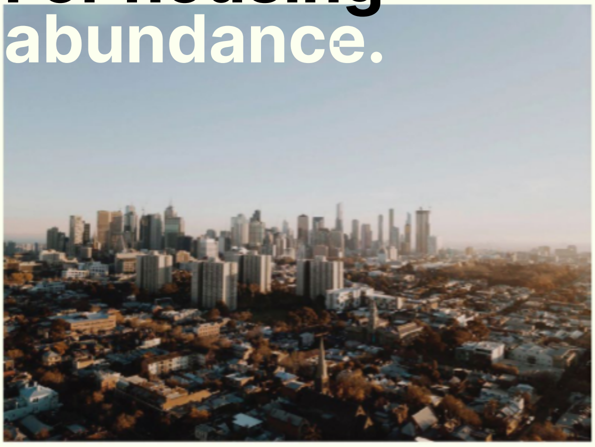
The following excerpt is from a YIMBY Melbourne press release. YIMBY refers to 'Yes In My Back Yard' and is a movement that advocates for increasing housing supply within city and suburban areas.

Write a response analysing the subsystem patterns in the following text. Ensure you link these patterns to function/s, purpose/s or elements of the situational or cultural context.

YIMBY Melbourne Relaunch: four key Policy Pillars, Local Action guides, and more

Yes In My Back Yard Melbourne

People-led. Grassroots. For housing abundance.



YIMBY Melbourne launches a new website, announcing Policy Pillars and releasing Local Action guides. This comes exactly one month after our Maribyrnong City Council win.

Key points

Visit the new website: **yimbymelbourne.org.au**

YIMBY Melbourne's Policy Team will be working across four pillars: 1. **Land Use & Zoning**; 2. **Planning Processes & Governance**; 3. **Taxation, Financing, & Incentives**; 4. **Heritage & Historical Restrictions on Land Use.**

YIMBY Melbourne's Local Action Guides provide easy links and basic guides to supporting development across 17 councils.

Jonathan O'Brien, Lead Organiser: "In the fight for housing abundance, digital infrastructure is key. YIMBYs are decentralised by nature, and hubs like the new YIMBY Melbourne website enable us to build and share knowledge."

Source: YIMBY Melbourne, https://www.yimbymelbourne.org.au/post/yimby-melbourne-relaunch-four-key-policy-pillars-local-action-guides-and-more

Jargon

Jargon is specialised language for a particular field. Formal use of jargon can help to assert authority and expertise by demonstrating a detailed and complex understanding of subject matter. It can make language more precise, which has the benefits of reducing lexical density (the proportion of content words in comparison to function words), and increasing clarity for a knowledgeable audience. For example, a surgeon may use medical jargon, such as asking for ‘scalpels’, ‘forceps’ and ‘gauze’ when in surgery, to ensure that they are given the correct tools.

However, jargon can also be used as a mechanism to exclude or confuse individuals and groups. This is particularly the case when it is used before an audience that does not have specialised expertise. Jargon can also contain longer and more complicated terminology, thereby increasing lexical density. More formal, academic or technical texts typically have high lexical density.

Jargon is so prevalent in bureaucratic and other occupation-based communications that, in 2022, New Zealand announced a new plain language law in the hope of banishing jargon from all public government communications. There is a similar strong push from the Australian Government for all written government content to use plain language in order to engage people with words ‘they can understand’.

Scan the code or click here to read the *Australian Government Style Manual*’s guide to plain language use.

Tip

Remember that you are trying to assert some expertise in your essays and analyses, so practise using formal language techniques, including lots of examples, jargon (in the form of metalanguage) and high levels of coherence.

Euphemism

Euphemism is used in formal language to navigate potentially sensitive and taboo topics to avoid offence. Euphemism can support social harmony through lessening the impact of a statement or indicating appropriate sensitivities to ideas and concepts that may be upsetting to an audience. For example, a boss may tell an employee that they are being ‘let go’ rather than ‘fired’, to soften the statement. This is important in formal contexts, particularly within a public context, as it can be used to meet social politeness standards, and ensures that the speaker or writer appeals to a wide variety of people. However, given euphemisms avoid directness, they can sometimes lead to communication breakdown, particularly when information needs to be clearly stated and understood.

Double speak

Double speak is purposely ambiguous, with overly euphemistic or misleading language choices that are used in order to obfuscate meaning or to misdirect the focus of an audience. When using double speak, speakers and writers 'talk around' a topic instead of being explicit about their intent. As a result, double speak relies heavily on inference, implication, euphemism and lexical ambiguity. For example, speakers and writers might use terms such as 'ill-advised' instead of 'bad idea', or 'collateral damage' when referring to civilian casualties or deaths. They may also choose to overuse formal language features, such as employing large amounts of jargon, syntactic patterning and semantic patterning, as a way of further manipulating the true meaning of their communication.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following property advertisement.

1 Timeless style with plenty of potential

2 Built in a bygone era and sitting on a vast allotment of approximately 700m^2, this property is
3 a homebuyer or developer's dream, offering a plethora of sensational opportunities.
4 Currently in its original form, the house offers a charming character-filled interior. It is
5 composed of four spacious bedrooms, one bathroom, a large lounge and a kitchen and
6 dining area.

7 With premium GRZ1 zoning, it's a perfect first home for those looking for a project, or
8 developers and investors to take the property on its next exciting journey – perhaps a
9 wonderful dual-occupancy development, or the envy of all, a family dream home (subject to
10 council approval).

11 With a fair, listed market-value price, this is a must-see opportunity, bursting with
12 extraordinary DIY potential.

The real estate post relies on formal language to make the property seem as appealing as possible to potential buyers. The use of double speak, such as in the noun phrases 'developer's dream' (line 3) and 'extraordinary DIY potential' (line 12), attempts to put a positive spin on the fact that the house likely needs a significant amount of work, to avoid deterring potential buyers. Similarly, the use of double speak in 'bygone era' (line 2) and 'charming character-filled' (line 4), implies that the house is old, but directs the audience to consider the age of the house as a selling point, rather than as an obstacle. Lastly, the listing uses jargon, such as the noun phrases 'premium GRZ1 zoning' (line 7) and 'dual-occupancy development' (line 9), to pique the interest of property developers or other parties who have the potential to see this as an investment, and therefore are more likely to be interested in buying.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses the purpose of the language choices.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is often applied to someone's use of language to persuade another into action, whether that action be supporting a perspective, ideology or concept, or physically doing something differently. Rhetoric is common in formal contexts as, when it is done well, it can win over an audience, drawing on features that indicate a command of the language.

Typical language features used for rhetorical effect include:

- subsystem patterns
- rhetorical appeals to emotions, logic or credibility
- repetition
- euphemism
- connotative language.

Non-discriminatory language

Non-discriminatory language seeks to unify by using more general terminology that effectively embraces a wider audience or group. By not drawing distinctions between individuals or groups, it promotes inclusion. Non-discriminatory language is common in formal language and can evolve rapidly. For example, many organisations have switched to using language that is gender inclusive and better reflects reality, such as 'firefighter' instead of 'fireman', and 'police officer' rather than 'policeman'.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following excerpt from the article 'Body glitter, moving freely, and headline acts: A day at Ability Fest' by Kate Thomas, who is a wheelchair user. The article is about Ability Fest, an all-accessible musical festival.

> As a wheelchair user, negotiating the uneven surfaces, often remote locations and must-have gumboots dress code for muddy weather at music festivals are just some of the reasons which made attending one a logistical struggle.
>
> But Ability Fest gets it. It sees the bigger picture of how the right environment lays the ground for the mentality of inclusion. It doesn't shy away from the complexities of disability, instead it embraces our stories.
>
> In a world where people with disability are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to those without disability and where we're denied our agency, choice and fundamental right to be safe as shown at the Disability Royal Commission, this was a day where disability was folded into the very DNA of the event.

Source: Kate Thomas, https://hireup.com.au/news/body-glitter-moving-freely-and-headline-acts-a-day-at-ability-fest/

In the article excerpt, Thomas explores the benefits of creating an inclusive environment for people with disabilities. Using front focus with the adverbial phrase ‘as a wheelchair user’ (line 1) establishes Thomas’ authority on disability and inclusion with the audience. Thomas uses non-discriminatory people-first language, such as the noun phrase ‘people with disability’ (line 7), to avoid negative or victimising language, and to be as inclusive and respectful as possible. Thomas also uses a rhetorical appeal to emotion within the article to emphasise how important inclusive events are for people with disabilities, and to persuade the audience to feel passionate about the topic. For example, she employs listing in ‘we’re denied our agency, choice and fundamental right to be safe’ (lines 8–9) to highlight the difficulty that people with disabilities can face when trying to access resources. Additionally, she uses figurative language such as metaphor in ‘disability was folded into the very DNA of the event’ (lines 9–10) to create a lasting image of an inclusive event in the minds of the audience.

Provides context for the analysis.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses how the example contributes to the author’s purpose.

Develop your understanding 7.2

In March 2022, the then-treasurer of Australia, Josh Frydenberg, was interviewed by ABC journalist Leigh Sales following the release of a new national budget. In this excerpt from the interview, Frydenberg has been given the floor to summarise the budget details. Analyse the text for jargon, euphemism, double speak and rhetoric.

Scan the code or click here to watch the video.

<A This is the number one topic A>/
(.) of discussion around the kitchen table and we’ve done it in a practical and a,
temporary (.) and in a targeted way/
uh halving the fuel excise/
<A providing the two-hundred-and-fifty dollar payments to pensioners, veterans,
(.) carers and others on income support. A>
A four-hundred-and-twenty (.) dollar boost to the <A low- and middle-income A>
tax offset that will go to more than <A 10 million working Australians,
and cheaper medicines and access (.) for both concession and non-concession,
card holders A>
these are very practical/
these are very responsible measures\
that respond to people’s needs\

Source: ABC News, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g22gkLsfUuc

Formal language features and contexts

The formality of language use is closely related to the context in which it is used. A higher level of formality is expected in professional, academic, political and legal contexts, where it is often particularly important that the language is inclusive and non-discriminatory so as not to threaten social harmony. Highly formal language also tends to be used when the message is communicated to a very large or unknown audience. For example, language used in public political addresses is generally more formal, using a range of features to either clarify or obfuscate, depending on the needs of the political party at the time.

Furthermore, formal language is typically used to communicate serious or important topics. In legal contexts – such as in a courtroom, in contracts or in lawyers' communications – the language is frequently formal, precise and detailed, to ensure that there can be no alternative interpretations of the speaker's or writer's meaning. Similarly, academic papers often use very specific jargon relating to the semantic domain of interest, using technical terms with highly nuanced meanings that other academics would be able to comprehend. This does, however, mean that formal language can be inaccessible for some audiences, who are less familiar with the context.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following legal email.

Dear Mr Macrae,

My name is James Thompson and I am writing to you on behalf of Ms Kaur, your neighbour, regarding an ongoing dispute about your pet dog and its persistent barking that continues to disturb the peace of my client. My client and I are now confirming to you, in written record, that this may be evidence of laxity in relation to animal welfare in such a way that impinges on my client's ability to enjoy undisturbed use of her home and surrounding land.

This is simply a good-faith request not to hear or be otherwise disturbed by the animal's distress that your negligence may or may not be causing. Swift rectification of this matter would be appreciated by my client; however, we are in a position to pursue this matter and seek arbitration. Both my client and I appreciate your cooperation and implore you to address the matter promptly and absolutely.

Cordially,

James Thompson, Esq.

Thompson's email request uses different elements of formal language to navigate a complicated legal situation. Thompson uses the formulaic opening 'Dear Mr Macrae' to establish a high level of formality for the email, demonstrating a professional tenor as is typical of writing relating to legal matters. The use of legal jargon, such as noun phrases 'good-faith request' (line 8) and 'arbitration' (line 11), reinforces a social distance by establishing Thompson's expertise in the legal field, while also meeting the expectations for a legal document. In addition, Thompson's repetition of the noun phrase 'my client' (lines 4, 6–7, 10 and 11) aims to avoid the ambiguity of personal pronouns, therefore reducing the risk of misinterpretation, which could have negative ramifications if the matter were to proceed further in the legal system. A high level of formality is also apparent in the low modality verb phrases 'may be evidence' (line 5), 'may or may not' (line 9) and 'would be appreciated' (line 10), which are euphemisms for Thompson's email functioning as a threat to Mr Macrae; that is, if he doesn't modify his dog's behaviour, he will be facing legal consequences.

Sets up the situation for analysis.

Explains how language features are shaped by the context.

Explains how the language feature links to the purpose and formal legal context, using appropriate metalanguage.

Develop your understanding 7.3

The following excerpt is from an academic article titled 'Happy times: An exploration of how Australian young adults define happiness'. The article is from the *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, which focuses on issues affecting young people.

Write a paragraph analysing how context influences the text's formal language features.

As Woodman and Leccardi (2015) argue, notions of temporality are central to youth studies as this period of life is most commonly described as a period of significant transition. Adding further complexity, the impact of these temporalities appears to shift on a societal level over time (Leccardi, 2015; Rosa, 2013). However, understanding temporal concepts and their interactions will assist in bringing clarity to questions within youth research (Woodman & Leccardi, 2015). The decline of happiness for young people navigating the transition to adulthood is no exception. Although notions of temporality have been labelled with a variety of terminology (Drake et al., 2008), this research posits that temporal orientation encapsulates an individual's overall tendency towards specific temporal characteristics, which include time perspectives categorised as *past*, *present* or *future*.

Source: Nathan McMillan et al., https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43151-021-00060-6

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CHAPTER 08

Purposes and functions of formal language

In this chapter, we explore how formal language is used to achieve particular purposes and intents. We examine how formal language can be used to maintain hierarchical social structures and distance between people, and how it can build rapport and bring together a wide audience who may not share similar interests or values. We also investigate how it can establish expertise or be used to deliberately create confusion through manipulating or obfuscating meanings.

Key knowledge covered:

- major functions that language serves when used in a given context
- the use of formal language for various purposes and intents, including:
    - politeness strategies
    - reinforcing social distance and authority
    - establishing expertise
    - promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport
    - clarifying, manipulating or obfuscating

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Social distance	The closeness of the relationship between participants. Social distance exists on a continuum, from distant to close, and is influenced by social and contextual factors.
Authority	The perceived power that a person or group holds.
Expertise	A high level of knowledge on a specific subject.
Clarifying	Using precise language to ensure that audiences can clearly understand the speaker or writer's meaning, without ambiguity.
Manipulating	Emphasising specific elements of a message (and downplaying others) to influence the response from the speaker or writer's audience.
Obfuscating	Using deliberately vague, ambiguous or confusing language that is difficult for an audience to follow.

Major functions that language serves in formal contexts

As with informal texts, formal texts can serve multiple functions simultaneously. Although a formal text can have the same underlying function/s as an informal text, the way in which the message is typically communicated is vastly different. That is, the text type and the language features used vary widely between informal and formal texts to best suit the context. The following provides a summary of how the major functions that language serves are typically presented in formal contexts.

→ See pages 33–4 to view the definitions of the major functions that language serves.

Referential

The referential function, which involves the passing on of information, might be evident in speeches, announcements or in communication between professionals.

Emotive

People might use semantic features of language to achieve an emotive function in formal contexts. This can involve careful selection of words, with reliance on particular connotations to convey emotion. In spoken texts, discourse features can also be used to express emotion, such as pausing during a speech to reflect sadness.

Conative

The conative function often occurs in conjunction with the referential function, as speakers selectively share information in order to persuade their audience. When stating requests or commands, speakers frequently make use of negative politeness strategies such as using low modality verbs or hedging.

Phatic

This often involves upholding social conventions such as greetings in openings, and using appropriate politeness strategies in closings. Formal phatic exchanges are often less intimate than informal ones, and may involve discussing neutral rather than personal topics. They are more likely to occur between those with greater levels of social distance.

Metalinguistic

The metalinguistic function may be evident when explaining jargon, industry-specific terms or other messages in order to ensure they are clearly understood.

Poetic

These are often found in literary works, where there is a focus on the aesthetic features of language such as semantic and syntactic patterning, use of rhythm and prosody, word choice and information flow. These can also be used to create emphasis in carefully constructed messages such as speeches and media communications.

Worked example

The following statement was issued by Collingwood CEO Craig Kelly, in response to racially motivated comments sent to Port Adelaide footballer Willie Rioli. Consider the analysis of the functions of language in the text.

> The Collingwood Football Club strongly condemns the abhorrent and disgusting racist remarks directed towards Willie Rioli.
>
> There is no room for racism in our game and we will not tolerate it – not on the field, off the field or online.
>
> All of us have a responsibility to call out this behaviour and our Club is committed to playing a role in educating as many members of the wider community as possible.
>
> We stand alongside all First Nations players, staff and supporters.
>
> Source: Collingwood Football Club, https://www.collingwoodfc.com.au/news/1385666/collingwood-stands-against-racism

Adjectives 'abhorrent' and 'disgusting' fulfil an **emotive** function, conveying a passionate and strong stand against racism.

Syntactic patterning in the form of antithesis in 'not on the field, off the field' creates a rhythm that can be seen as **poetic** in function, while also maintaining a primarily **emotive** function because it unequivocally takes a stand against racism.

The **referential** function of clarifying this position against racism is evident in the active voice of the declarative that promotes responsibility in supporting inclusivity.

The **conative** function is achieved through the determiner 'all', pronoun 'us' and verb phrase 'call out' as collective responsibility and action are emphasised.

Develop your understanding 8.1

The following text is an advertisement for Sunset Cruise Line, a vacation cruise company for senior travellers.

> Sail the days away!
>
> Are you retired but looking for a new adventure? Are you keen to explore a new country while travelling luxuriously with all the amenities you could need at your fingertips?
>
> Setting sail from your nearest Australian capital city, Sunset Cruise Line offers trips to a range of destinations in the South Pacific, including Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Additionally, we have partnered with Continental Cruise Lines to provide new routes throughout Europe. You could sip champagne under the Eiffel Tower, play a round of golf on the Spanish coast, or indulge in some chocolates in the Belgian Grand-Place!

With state-of-the-art accommodation, fine dining, a cinema, bars, bingo and swimming pools, our ships have everything you need for a relaxing experience at sea. We also offer a wide range of onshore activities at each port – there truly is something for everyone! Don't delay in getting in touch with us at booking@sunsetcruiseline.com to reserve your trip now.

1. What is the primary function of the text and how is it achieved?
2. Identify two additional functions that the text performs. Give examples using metalanguage.
3. How do the various text functions work together to appeal to an older demographic?

Purposes and intents of formal language

Formal language can be adapted by users to reflect their different purposes and intents. For example, it can demonstrate authority by communicating expertise or reinforcing the hierarchical positioning of the interaction; alternatively, it could foster social cohesion and inclusivity between the communicator and their audience through the use of politeness strategies. It can also clarify or obfuscate a message, build rapport, and exclude or manipulate others. Overall, formal language allows us to control a message and, by extension, our relationship with our audience.

Politeness strategies

In formal contexts, language is often more rigid and conventional, with speakers and writers more likely to employ a high level of politeness to ensure that all participants feel respected. For example, politeness markers such as the interjections 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please' tend to be framed more conventionally as complete words or phrases. In informal contexts, however, participants are more likely to use shortenings or slang when using politeness markers, depending on the tenor and purpose of the conversation. Therefore, in a formal conversation the interjection 'thank you' is typically met with the clause 'you're welcome' as an acknowledgement; in an informal context, participants may use the shortened 'thanks' and 'no worries'.

Further to this, participants in formal situations will use politeness strategies to build connections as a means of achieving social harmony.

Positive politeness

Positive politeness strategies work towards uniting people through empathy and common bonds, encouraging others to feel valued. Positive politeness is typically used in formal contexts when participants have a shared goal or understanding, such as within a business or political party. They are also often used when participants have a reduced social distance, as positive politeness encourages and builds on social connections. As in informal contexts, positive politeness strategies in formal contexts can include emphasising similarity, showing interest, using humour, offering compliments or using inclusive language.

Some examples of formal language use for the purpose of achieving positive politeness are in the table below.

Positive politeness strategy	Example of formal language
Emphasising similarity	‘Those of us who have been in this position will know what it means.’
Showing interest	‘That does sound difficult! What do you think you will do now?’
Using humour	‘Stephen was the youngest of four children ... and self-proclaimed favourite!’
Offering compliments	‘You have been a joyful part of our community, and we are sorry to see you go.’
Using inclusive language	‘As a nation, we all must come together.’

Negative politeness

Negative politeness is often used in formal language with the goal of promoting social cohesion. The deferential nature of negative politeness strategies aims to communicate in a tactful way so as not to directly challenge or impose upon the audience, while simultaneously showing respect for their autonomy. In formal contexts, negative politeness strategies such as hedging and indirectness can be used to avoid confrontation or taboo topics, to ensure that audiences are able to enjoy a pleasant environment.

Negative politeness strategies are also used to assert social hierarchies when there is a perceived social distance between the speaker or writer and their audience. Through the use of polite expressions and formal terms of address, individuals convey a sense of respect and consideration for the audience’s position or status. For example, a university student may use deferential language in an email to their professor, calling them ‘Dr’ to recognise their authority. While using formal politeness markers can be a powerful tool when meeting and interacting with a wide audience or when displaying deference, their application with intimate friends can be a face-threatening act as they work against establishing equality.

Tip

Try to find concrete, contemporary and contextualised examples of positive and negative politeness strategies in public discourse. Build up your example bank with formal language that uses politeness strategies as well as face-threatening acts, to allow you to make contrasts.

Some examples of formal language used for the purpose of achieving negative politeness are provided below.

Negative politeness strategy	Example of formal language
Hedging	'Perhaps you might prefer a more subtle flavour.'
Being indirect and ambiguous	'Is this something you intend to hand in as a final draft?'
Using low modality verbs	'Could you possibly pour me a glass of water?'
Apologising	'I do apologise for the interruption.'
Applying other mitigating strategies	'We welcome Dr James Muecke, 2020 Australian of the Year, to the stage.'

Worked example

Tracey is learning guitar at a music school; however, her teacher has cancelled classes for three weeks in a row. The transcript below is of a conversation between Tracey and the coordinator, Mark, following her email complaint about the situation. Consider the analysis of formal language used for the purpose of achieving politeness.

1 M: Hello Tracey (.) this is Mark (.) the instrumental coordinator at Maple Park Music\
2 How are you?
3 T: I'm well thanks Mark (.) Thank you very much for calling.
4 M: Of course (.) We are calling regarding the (.) recent situation with your lessons\
5 T: I know it's not your fault (.) but I was disappointed to have another cancellation/
6 M: We are also ve=ry disappointed that this has happened,
7 and I want to extend my apologies for the misunderstanding\
8 We really value your feedback on this matter (.) so we would like to organise some,
9 alternative (.) lessons for you?
10 Otherwise, we can reimburse you for the lesson fees?
11 T: I would like to do the lessons\
12 M: I've heard you're progressing very quickly (.) so it is great you want to continue/
13 Would you be able to please send us an email with a (.) few times that work?
14 T: Absolutely.
15 M: Thank you for your time Tracey (.) I hope you have a great day/

Within the phone call, Mark uses formal language and a variety of politeness strategies to appease Tracey as the customer. Mark begins the interaction using the positive politeness strategy of showing interest, asking ‘How are you?’ (line 2) to establish a friendly tone for the conversation. Mark furthers this by emphasising the similarity between himself and Tracey, saying ‘we are also very disappointed’ (line 6) and by using compliments, such as ‘you’re progressing very quickly’ (line 12). Mark uses these positive politeness strategies to build rapport with Tracey, thereby minimising the chances that Tracey will be upset about her missed lessons. Mark also uses the negative politeness strategy of indirectness and inference when referring to the ‘recent situation’ (line 4). That is, rather than stating that the lessons were cancelled, he uses vague and ambiguous phrasing that Tracey has to infer meaning from, in order to avoid confrontation and maintain a positive interaction. He also uses the low modality verb ‘would’ (line 13) to frame his request for Tracey’s time and effort as politely as possible, to avoid seeming like he is imposing on her. Additionally, Mark apologises to Tracey (line 7) to meet her face needs, and does so through the formal ‘my apologies’ to maintain a level of professionalism.

Identifies focus of analysis.

Identifies relevant example using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses how the examples are used to meet the speaker's purpose.

Develop your understanding 8.2

The following text is an email received by Rhonda, the owner of a young kitten called Lara, sent from the manager of a veterinary clinic. In it, the managing vet is apologising for the incorrect treatment of Lara by one of the clinic’s vets.

1 Dear Rhonda,

2 Thank you for taking my phone call today. I am so sorry for what you and Lara
3 have been through. We have determined that the situation occurred due to human
4 error and we recognise that it could have had very serious consequences. I am so
5 relieved to know that Lara is recovering well at home.
6 I want to reassure you that the practice will take steps to reduce the risk of this
7 happening to another patient.
8 In light of your unfortunate experience, I can appreciate you might want to seek
9 veterinary assistance from another clinic. However, we would welcome the
10 opportunity to restore your faith in this practice and assure you of our very best
11 attention should you choose to return.
12 If I can do anything else to help, please let me know.

13 Kind regards,
14 Mariella Monkton

1 Annotate the text for features of politeness. Classify each politeness feature as positive or negative.

2 Write an analysis of the text in terms of politeness. Use appropriate examples and metalanguage in your response.

Promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport

Formal language can be utilised to foster a peaceful, comfortable and inclusive environment for all participants. This is particularly important in public contexts or in situations where speakers and writers are addressing an unknown audience, to avoid causing offence and to encourage connection between participants.

Promoting social harmony

The promotion of **social harmony** involves the breaking down of barriers that might exist between various cultures and social groups. Formal language is often used to promote social harmony by minimising these barriers. This can be achieved through using non-discriminatory language, euphemism, politeness strategies and other techniques that minimise face-threatening acts.

Negotiating social taboos

Social taboos are actions and beliefs that create discomfort for a particular society. In formal language, euphemism and figurative language are often used as mechanisms to help negotiate the discussion of taboos, along with neutral lexical choices, highly technical language, nominalisation and use of tense. For example, the CEO of a company that is losing money may say that they are 'experiencing a negative cash flow' when talking to shareholders, to avoid the negative connotations of the word 'debt'.

Building rapport

Formal language can be used to build **rapport** between participants by showing respect. Rapport is likely to be built between strangers when their respective negative face needs are met, as this provides them with the agency to engage in the discourse or not, and allows them to select the degree to which they engage. Overly informal language can be damaging to rapport if introduced too soon.

Formal language plays an important role in acknowledging an existing rapport by respecting social distance and autonomy, allowing for connections to be maintained in a methodical and considered way. Writers and speakers may use positive or negative politeness to maintain rapport, depending on the degree of social distance between participants.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of formal language used for the purposes of promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese released a media statement reflecting upon his relationship with Yunupingu, a member of the Yolngu People of Arnhem Land. Yunupingu was a respected Elder and First Nations activist. The following is a small excerpt from this statement.

> 1 At Garma last year, after I announced the details of the referendum, he asked me,
> 2 'Are you serious this time?' I replied: 'Yes, we're going to go for it.'
>
> 3 When I spoke with him just over a week ago, I told him I was confident we would get
> 4 there. This brought him some comfort, as did his totems of fire and baru, the
> 5 saltwater crocodile, which watched over him in his final days.

Source: Anthony Albanese, https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/media-centre/yunupingu

Prime Minister Albanese works to reduce social distance between himself and the broader Australian community in an effort to build social harmony. He communicates his interactions with Yunupingu, deceased Yolngu Elder, through the subject pronoun 'I' (line 3) and third-person pronoun 'him' (line 3) to show a close personal connection. He further uses the prepositional phrase 'over a week ago' (line 3) with adverb modifier 'just' to emphasise the recency of their interaction, demonstrating their personal connection and close rapport. Prime Minister Albanese employs the first-person plural pronoun 'we' (line 3) to extend this connection to the citizens of Australia with himself acting as the nation's representative. Additionally, he uses the euphemism 'final days' (line 5) to negotiate the taboo of death, promoting a comforting environment for the audience. The alliteration of 'confident' (line 3) and 'comfort' (line 4) draws attention to the lexemes, which present the nation as being harmonious with the wishes of the Aboriginal Elder, building a connection between the audience and Yunupingu, while also reducing the social distance between Albanese and his audience in the shared grieving.

Sets up the context of the formal text for analysis.

Provides relevant textual evidence with appropriate metalanguage.

Explains how the text fulfils purposes of promoting social harmony, negotiating social taboos and building rapport through formal language features.

Includes cohesive ties to information that came before.

Tip

Remember to always focus your analysis for short-answer questions and analytical commentaries on what is present in the text and why it has been included.

Develop your understanding 8.3

Network Ten released a social media post following the death of celebrity television chef Jock Zonfrillo in 2023.

> Network Ten and Endemol Shine Australia are deeply shocked and saddened at the sudden loss of Jock Zonfrillo, a beloved member of the MasterChef Australia family. Jock passed away in Melbourne yesterday. MasterChef Australia will not air this week.

Source: Channel 10, https://twitter.com/Channel10AU/status/1652892948651196416

1. Who is the audience for this post?
2. How does Network Ten build rapport with its audience?
3. How has taboo been negotiated within the post? Provide at least one example, using metalanguage.
4. Does this post promote social harmony? Justify your position with reference to at least one example from the text, including appropriate metalanguage.

Reinforcing social distance and authority

The use of formal language features can indicate that there is **social distance** between interlocutors. This could be because participants are unfamiliar with each other, such as a speaker addressing a wide or unknown audience. In this instance, speakers are more likely to rely on standard formal language that is unlikely to offend or isolate anyone. Without having a defined or intimate audience, speakers may also use euphemisms and other mitigating strategies to navigate material that might divide or offend the audience.

Formal language is also often used if there is a strong hierarchy within a relationship. This can be shown in formal terms of address for the title or occupation of the receiver of the message, which can indicate that they hold authority over the speaker. Furthermore, making apologies shows deference as it acknowledges that there is some imposition on the receiver of the message. Low modality verbs and other forms of hedging may also be used to defer to a more authoritative position, showing a willingness to adjust a viewpoint in response to the individual's position of power. Authority levels can further be communicated through syntactic features. Passive sentences, for example, operate to remove subject agency, and could be used to convey the power of a group over an individual.

Worked example

The following is an excerpt from the National Press Club Address on 17 April 2023. ABC reporter Jane Norman (JN) is managing the floor between Andrew Tillet (AT), political correspondent for *The Australian Financial Review*, and the Honourable Penny Wong (PW), Minister for Foreign Affairs. The conversation is referring to a speech Wong gave about Australia's relationship with China, as well as former prime minister Paul Keating's subsequent criticism of her policy negotiation. This was deemed significant because Keating and Wong are both representatives of the same political party.

Consider the analysis of formal language used for the purposes of negotiating social hierarchy.

JN: Before we get into a broader discussion (.) dissecting all of the issues that you raised
(.) in your speech today, I was wondering (.) were you forewarned that Mr Keating
was going to be making those comments and have you spoken to Mr Keating since?
PW: Wow um (.) you can probably work that out for yourself\
But (.) ah what I'd say on the Pacific is the the importance of the Pacific to Australia\
the importance of a peaceful stable region to Australia,
I think I laid out in the speech (.) and has been well understood by previous uh,
prime ministers <P and governments. P>
But I think on Mr Keating what I would say is this\
I think in to=ne and substance,
he diminished both his legacy <A and the subject matter. A>
JN: All right our first question today is Andrew Tillett from The Australian Financial
Review\
AT: Thanks Jane ah Minister, thank you for your speech. You-[you've laid out-]
PW: [Sorry it was] a bit long.
AT: No= no (.) About-
JN: That's fine/
AT: Five minutes over (.) I'm sure the the ABC won't mind/

Source: Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, https://youtu.be/knU6rEBSvdA?t=2195

Social distance is informed by the hierarchical positioning of the three interlocutors evident in their terms of address. Tillet addresses Wong by her title, Minister, showing deference and respect to her position. Norman also shows deference to Andrew Tillet, using his full name and the proper

Introduces what the paragraph will be about.

Observations cohesively centre around the same ideas – in this case, social distance and hierarchy.

Uses cohesive strategies to tie examples together.

noun in the prepositional phrase ‘from The Australian Financial Review’ (lines 12–13), constructing a hierarchical position for him, based on his association with the prestigious publication. In contrast, Norman is referred to by her first name, Jane, indicating her administrative role in this interaction. Wong’s apology for the length of her speech, ‘Sorry it was a bit long’ (line 15) contributes to a resultant equalling of the hierarchical discrepancy between herself and the other speakers. Wong also distances herself from Paul Keating by using his title and surname, Mr Keating, when referring to his comments. She positions him with less authority when using the noun phrase ‘previous prime ministers’ (lines 7–8) indicating that her speech aligns with the views of most former primer ministers, and that Keating’s view on the matter is an outlier. In so doing, Wong positions herself alongside the majority, suggesting that hers is a voice of reason.

References examples from the text with appropriate metalanguage.

Establishing expertise

People can use formal language to demonstrate **expertise** and to differentiate themselves from people who aren’t knowledgeable about a particular field. When a speaker or writer is attempting to establish their expertise, they may use formal lexical and syntactic features such as jargon and complex or embedded sentences. They may also use a range of patterning, such as antonymy and parallelism, to articulate complex relationships between ideas or key knowledge. Using these features can demonstrate the depth and complexity of a person’s understanding so their audience is more likely to believe and trust what they say.

Experts who use jargon with the wrong audience or in the wrong context may still be perceived as experts, but may not engage their audience due to a lack of coherence. This is sometimes done deliberately to obfuscate the message. Alternatively, the expert may choose to employ metaphors and similes to construct analogies, expressing their ideas without compromising coherence. The interaction between the expert and their audience is informed by purpose, intent and context.

Worked example

The following excerpt comes from the ABC radio show *Science with Dr Karl*, with a listener, Chai, calling in to ask about the upcoming eclipse. Dr Karl is a well-known science communicator who refers to all his guests as ‘Doctor’ regardless of their actual title or profession. Consider the analysis of formal language used for the purpose of communicating expertise.

1 Chai: Oka=y Doctor Karl/
2 So (.) in Exmouth we get to see totality when the Moon perfectly blocks the Sun\
3 <A so much so A> that you can still see the sun flares\
4 but (.) why is it that the Moon and the Sun are perfectly matching at this point?
5 I mean <A if it's A> if the Sun's,
6 if the Moon is too close or too small\
7 or the Moon is too big or too far\
8 it's not going to perfectly match the size of the Sun.
9 <A So is it just coincidence? A>
10 Karl: It is an amazing coincidence,
11 and you are doing very well Doctor Chai.

Source: Dr Karl Podcast, https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/dr-karl-podcast/sciencetriplej-20-04-23/102248364

In this formal conversation, both Dr Karl and Chai use formal language to establish their knowledge of the field of science. When he refers to Chai with the honorary title 'Doctor Chai' (line 11), Karl is constructing an interaction in which the guest and he can converse as experts. This not only minimises social distance, lifting the voice of the guest, but also promotes the notion that experts also ask questions. Furthermore, Chai uses the noun phrases 'totality' (line 2) and 'sun flares' (line 3) as jargon to indicate to Dr Karl and the listening audience that he has some knowledge and has done research to increase his expertise in the area of astronomical phenomena.

Introductory sentence that establishes the context of the formal language exchange.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Explores the way in which expertise is communicated.

Develop your understanding 8.4

1 What are some of the advantages of experts using technical jargon to assert their expertise?
2 Are there times when jargon should not be used by experts?
3 Does expert language always equate to expertise in a particular field?
4 Do you think the language used by experts allows them to do their jobs more effectively? Use examples to support your argument.

Clarifying, manipulating or obfuscating

As formal language tends to be pre-planned and rehearsed, writers and speakers have the opportunity to manipulate their language to suit a variety of purposes, target particular topics and elicit a specific response from an audience.

Clarifying

Clarifying is important in formal language to ensure clear communication. Formal language gives users the ability to be specific, precise and accurate, by attempting to remove the ambiguity that sometimes arises in language use. The selection of language in formal contexts often needs to address a wide and diverse audience who do not necessarily have shared knowledge or values; therefore, there is an enhanced need for clarity when dealing with formal texts. At other times, a formal text may only need to provide clarity for those who have a shared knowledge base, allowing for greater specificity in the language, such as in an academic journal article.

Manipulating

Manipulating is giving prominence to one aspect of a linguistic message to bias the audience. Formal language can be used to manipulate audiences by focusing the message on one viewpoint without paying much attention to alternative viewpoints. Speakers and writers may manipulate information flow through front focus, end focus or clefting, to emphasise the ideas that they want to promote. Formal language can also be used to manipulate audiences by promoting a particular viewpoint as fact rather than personal opinion.

Obfuscating

Obfuscating is the intentional use of language to make it more difficult for an audience to discern the meaning of a message. It is seen in formal language when the speaker or writer wishes to hide or mask information that they do not want the audience to know, such as information that could diminish their reputation. Speakers and writers will often use complex formal language, including rhetoric, jargon or double speak, to achieve this outcome.

Worked examples

Consider the analysis of formal language used for the purpose of obfuscation.

The following excerpt is former prime minister Scott Morrison's response to a report by the Royal Commission on the Robodebt Scheme (the unlawful automated debt recovery process used by Services Australia between 2016 and 2020).

> I reject completely each of the findings which are critical of my involvement in authorising the scheme and are adverse to me.

Source: Quote from Scott Morrison, https://theconversation.com/robodebt-royal-commissioner-makes-multiple-referrals-for-prosecution-condemning-scheme-as-crude-and-cruel-209318

Former prime minister Morrison indicates a clear, direct response to the Royal Commission with the active verb 'reject' and adverb 'completely' (line 1). However, the relative clause modifying the object of his rejections 'which are critical of my involvement in authorising the scheme and are adverse to me' (lines 1–2) works to create ambiguity and obfuscate his responsibility by placing the onus on his audience to determine meaning. Morrison further manipulates his audience with end focus of the personal object pronoun 'me' (line 2), positioning himself as a victim of the Royal Commission, minimising his role in the scheme.

Introduces clarity to show how both clarification and obfuscation can work simultaneously.

Uses metalanguage from various subsystems.

Reveals the underlying implications of the use of language features.

Consider the following discussion on the ways wellness and supplement companies might use formal language to potentially obfuscate and mislead consumers. This discussion was written after reflection upon the article, 'How fake science sells wellness products' by Rina Raphael in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Scan the code or click here to read Raphael's article.

The wellness and supplement industry in Australia has rapidly expanded, reflecting global trends. As health consciousness rises and marketing techniques evolve, Australian pharmacies overflow with myriad products, from vitamins to herbal concoctions. A striking feature of these products is their use of formal language. They often employ scientific jargon such as with the phrases 'clinically tested' and 'research backed' to lend an air of credibility. Euphemisms such as 'boosts' and 'supports' are used to suggest benefits without making concrete promises. However, the most subtle and potentially misleading formal language device used in this industry is the use of obfuscatory language. This is evident when products use positive health terms, suggesting therapeutic benefits, but then counteract these implications with disclaimers such as in the syntactically listed 'not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease'. Essentially, they imply a health benefit while simultaneously denying any specific medical value. This growth in the industry, while indicating increased consumer interest, also underscores the challenges posed by formal language use, as consumers grapple with discerning genuine benefits amid products with potentially ambiguous or misleading claims.

Introduces the topic, describing the vast range of products available in Australian pharmacies.

Introduces discussion of the use of formal language in product descriptions and claims.

Using relevant metalanguage, provides examples of formal language found on packaging and conveys intended purpose.

Introduces obfuscatory language as a more deceptive feature of formal language.

Elaborates on an example of obfuscatory language explaining how it is used.

Concludes by pointing to the difficulty consumers face due to the use of formal language.

Develop your understanding 8.5

1 The RSPCA has the following information on its website about deciding to adopt a pet.

> You will be committed to providing for all the requirements of your animal – food, exercise, housing, grooming and veterinary care. Before acquiring any new companion animal, it is absolutely essential to thoroughly research the care the animal will need to ensure you have the capacity to meet the physiological, behavioural and social needs of the animal.

Source: RSPCA Australia, https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-do-i-need-to-know-before-i-get-a-new-pet/

a Identify the purpose of this excerpt.
b Identify two features you can see being used to clarify.
c What information are the features attempting to clarify?
d Has the writer attempted to manipulate the reader in a particular way? Identify at least two examples using metalanguage.

2 The following excerpt is from a legal letter. Ms Demir suffered a workplace injury and has sought compensation from her employer. She received this letter from the company's lawyer in response.

> We, as a company, do not admit to any wrongdoing on the part of the company per se, rather, indicate that any misfortune that was experienced by Ms Demir was the result of a combination of ineffectual policy as provided by the governing body and happenstance. Therefore, we assert that the company is not obliged to accede to Ms Demir's requests for compensatory damages, however we do extend our deepest sympathies to Ms Demir at this time.

a Identify two features you can see being used to obfuscate in this response.
b Why do you think the writer has made these linguistic choices?

CHAPTER
09

Formal language and discourse

In this chapter, we explore formal language in both spoken and written texts. While formal texts may have some incidents of spontaneity, many are carefully crafted – sometimes not even by the speaker – with consideration of the register, tenor, audience and speakers' intents and purposes. We start by exploring the specific features that contribute to formal speech and then examine how discourse strategies manifest in formal communication. Lastly, we analyse the discourse factors that create cohesion and coherence in formal texts. This chapter develops your understanding of how individuals use formal language to control their message and, consequently, their relationship with their audience.

Key knowledge covered:

- features of spoken discourse in creating formal texts
- discourse strategies used by speakers and the ways in which cooperation can be achieved
- the role of discourse factors in creating textual cohesion and coherence in formal texts

Features of spoken discourse in formal texts

Formal spoken discourse is often planned, edited and rehearsed, although in some instances, an interlocutor may rely on their expertise and experience to navigate an unplanned formal interaction. Formal discourse often prioritises clarity and promotes a professional and authoritative tone. In formal interactions, many discourse features tend to be fully prepared and therefore more purposeful, such as the use of planned pauses. Formal discourse may also contain conventional discourse particles, non-fluency features and paralinguistic features as the speaker frames their thoughts in an articulate way. Overall, speakers use the features of formal discourse to control communication and help ensure that their purposes are achieved.

→ See pages 12–17 to view explanations of spoken discourse features, with accompanying examples.

Openings

Openings are used to establish contact or introduce people and/or topics. In formal texts, they may be scripted or rehearsed and may follow a conventional format depending on the context of the interaction. For example, it is customary for a speaker to open a public speech in Australia with an Acknowledgement of Country and then to welcome the audience. Formal openings can also signal to an audience when a ceremony or event is about to begin.

Example

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and would like to pay my respect to Elders past and present.

Closings

Closings are how participants end a conversation. There are many ways to close a conversation; however, in formal conversations they tend to be quite formulaic. For example, in a professional setting a speaker is likely to close a conversation with 'Thank you so much for your time'. In formal contexts, closings are also often used to meet politeness standards, and to establish whether the interaction was successful for the participants.

Example

I wish you all the very best in the future. Thank you.

Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pairs are quite common in formal contexts as a method of topic management, such as in the questions and responses in a formal interview. Adjacency pairs are also used to meet politeness standards, which are typically higher in formal contexts, or to ensure clarity, as would be evident within a FAQ section on a website.

Example

Host: Welcome to the program.

Guest: Thank you for having me.

Minimal responses / backchannels

Minimal responses (also known as **backchannels**) have a similar purpose in both formal and informal texts. They are designed to provide feedback for the speaker, whether that is through affirmation, showing support or signalling enthusiasm. In formal texts, they are likely to signal that a conversation participant is following and understanding the communication.

Example

Guest: I feel flattered when people recognise me.

Host: mm hmm.

Overlapping speech

Overlapping speech is less common in formal texts than in informal ones, as speaking turns are often more formulaic and participants tend to have clearer roles within conversations. Therefore, when there is overlapping speech in formal conversation, it can signal that there is a power imbalance between participants, or that the social environment is not harmonious.

Example

Consultant: We need to be realistic about how this [merger will impact sales.]
CEO: [It is our only strategy.]

Discourse markers/particles

In formal texts, **discourse markers** or **discourse particles** are often used to organise conversation or speech. They can be used to help improve the flow of speech by signalling topic changes for an audience to follow, or to soften blunt statements, particularly when there is social distance or a power imbalance between participants.

Example

Well, I don't think you have provided the whole truth in this instance.

Non-fluency features

Although formal texts are often well prepared and rehearsed, **non-fluency features** are still present in formal speech because they are a natural part of speaking. Non-fluency features may signal that the speaker is taking time to formulate a thought or trying to remember their prepared talking points. Non-fluency features can also be used in a planned and considered way, such as pausing to create emphasis.

Examples

On reflection (.) I think (.) I could have made a better decision. (pauses)

Thank you to um aah all those who have supported me. (filled pause / voiced hesitation)

This is evidence of we- what we're seeing at the moment on the international stage. (false start)

Tell me about tell me about what you've done. (repetition)

We expect a return of thirty-seven- sorry- forty-seven per cent on this investment. (repair)

Worked example

Consider the analysis of discourse features in the interview from *10 News First*. The interviewee is the CEO of Media Diversity Australia, Mariam Veiszadeh (MV). Veiszadeh and the host are discussing the resignation of journalist and Wiradjuri man Stan Grant from his role as the host of the ABC program *Q+A*, after he received racial abuse during the ABC's coverage of the coronation of King Charles III.

1 Host: Mariam (.) thanks for joining us\
2 w- w- we were all watching this last night what was your reaction?
3 MV: It's absolutely heartbreaking Nerelda watching this unfold\
4 And I think um as heartbreaking as it i=s (..) Stan has left us with a gift,
5 A gift for us to really (.) um reflect on his words,
6 and it's a powerful call to action for the entire Australian media landsca=pe,
7 um (.) to think about what needs to happen to do better.
8 Host: He has also left us with a huge hole in the media landscape as well\
9 MV: There is a huge void (.) to be filled,
10 a=nd unlike whe=n someone like Hamish McDonald, perhaps (.) aah steps away
11 o=r Leigh Sales (.) o=r (.) others that have stepped away um,
12 (.) there are others that fill that void.
13 In the case of Sta=n (.) and what he represents (.) a=nd who he is,
14 ah his stature his um seniority (..) that burden of responsibility= um,
15 it's it's hard for that to lay on the shoulders of others.

Source: *10 News First*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKzTp1CK-E0.

In this formal interview, the CEO of Media Diversity Australia, Mariam Veiszadeh, laments the resignation of Stan Grant from Australian media, to the host and *Q+A* audience. The host begins the interaction with the formal opening 'thanks for joining us' (line 1), which is conventional for a television interview, and indicates a level of formality towards both Veiszadeh and the audience. The speakers use adjacency pairs, such as those initiated by the host, with the question-answer pair (lines 2–3) beginning with the interrogative 'what was your reaction?' and the information-acknowledgement pair (lines 8–9) beginning with 'He has also left us ...' The host uses these adjacency pairs to encourage Veiszadeh to respond and give her thoughts on the topic, which is typical in an interview context. Veiszadeh uses various discourse features to negotiate the sensitivity of the event and accommodate the partly spontaneous nature of her response. She pauses in the utterance 'as heartbreaking as it is (..) Stan has left us with a gift' (line 4) to emphasise Grant's humanity and frame his decision as benefiting the Australian community. Also, the elongation in the noun phrase 'media landsca=pe' (line 6) serves to hold the floor as Veiszadeh clarifies the previous ambiguity of the bureaucratic language 'call to action' (line 6).

Identifies context for the discussion.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Explains how the example relates to formality.

Explains how the examples relate to the speakers' intents.

Develop your understanding 9.1

Consider the following formal text in terms of its spoken discourse features.

Australian comedian Luke McGregor (LM) discusses the Robodebt Scheme as part of a panel on *Q+A* with the host, Patricia Karvelas, and panellists such as Australian Greens Senator Barbara Pocock (BP).

1 Read the transcript below and complete the following table, identifying and analysing the effect of the features indicated in blue in the 'Example' column. Ensure you use the correct metalanguage when labelling and analysing spoken discourse features. The first table entry has been completed for you.

1 Host: Luke
2 LM: <H> I mean I think it's=,
3 PWC is obviously a for-profit company, a lot of the (.) all the consulting
4 compa[nies]
5 BP: [Yes]
6 LM: <A the government uses are [for profit right/] A>
7 BP: [They're not charities.]
8 They're not doing it for the love of it, no=
9 LM: I think it's (.) I think it's like really unsurprising like that this happened,
10 like, I think it's more, it's useful to think of corporations like robots\
11 Like robots (.) like corporations have a goal and that's to make money\
12 and PWC saw an opportunity (.) used the information they had,
13 from the government to make money.

Source: *Q+A*, https://youtu.be/81UZbeq-qtU?t=807

Example	Metalanguage	Effect
'Yes' (line 5)	*Minimal response / backchanneling*	*Positive politeness strategy showing interest in what LM is saying*
'[They're not charities.]' (line 7)		
'a lot of the (.) all the consulting companies' (lines 3–4)		
'Like robots (.) like corporations have a goal' (line 11)		
'I think it's (.) I think it's like (line 9)		

2 Write a paragraph linking your observations to the formal nature of the text.

Discourse strategies and cooperation in formal texts

Formal texts tend to be maintained through a formulaic structural approach, rather than spontaneously arranged. As a result, discourse strategies are typically rigid and routine and are designed to ensure cooperation as an essential part of upholding formal protocol. These strategies are often more overt, using mutually recognised discourse particles or more standard conversational norms, to ensure that all participants can follow the conversation.

→ See pages 18–20 to view explanations of discourse strategies.

Topic management

Topic management occurs in formal spoken texts, whether it be a speech or an interaction between two or more participants. Due to the higher levels of preparation in formal texts, shifts in topic can be planned and woven carefully into the discourse. These shifts may be flagged using obvious measures such as a discourse particle or, in an interview, a new question that is completely different from the one before.

The way in which a topic is managed also reveals information about the power structure between the speakers, or the speaker and the audience. When a speaker holds a socially distant or hierarchically powerful position within the communication, they can transition between topics and expect that audience members or other interlocutors will respond accordingly.

Turn-taking

In formal contexts, there is a higher expectation of compliance with conversational norms. Consequently, **turn-taking** in formal discourse tends to be smooth and directed, with interlocutors fulfilling societal expectations of completing adjacency pairs and responding to interrogatives or imperatives. The roles of the speakers also tend to dictate how the floor is managed and by whom. For example, if there is a disparate power relationship between interlocutors, it would be expected for the person of greater power to be able to use imperatives, while those of lesser power may use interrogatives to pass the floor or indicate the completion of their turn through falling intonation.

Management of repair sequences

The **management of repair sequences** in a formal exchange is impacted by a number of different considerations. This can include the underlying intents of the interlocutors, such as whether they are aiming to present themselves as authoritative or as having expertise at the expense of their connection to the audience. Furthermore, conventions of the situational context, as well as hierarchical roles of the interlocutors can impact how repairs are approached. For example, a tutor may correct a student's grammar, but it may be less socially acceptable for a student to correct a tutor's grammar.

Code switching

Code switching can be used in formal texts as a way of bridging cultural boundaries in the quest for unity and social harmony. Code switching is highly dependent on context and, in formal situations, is often used to demonstrate respect, such as an ethnolect speaker using appropriate non-English honorifics to refer to elders.

Scan the code or click here to view a video about tenor and relationships in spoken discourse, on our webpage of further resources.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following interview.

Australian Greens Senator and First Nations spokesperson Dorinda Cox (DC) is interviewed by Karla Grant (KG) on *Living Black*, a current affairs program run by SBS that focuses on stories affecting First Nations people. In this excerpt, they are discussing Cox's new role after First Nations politician Lidia Thorpe's resignation from the Australian Greens party due to her stance on the 2023 Voice referendum.

1	KG:	At the same time Lidia Thorpe resigned from the party,
2		over this decision to support a YES vote (.) was that a loss for the party?
3	DC:	Look, I think that th- the work that Lidia has agreed to to go on and continue to do is,
4		so important (.) so important for Mob/
5		and it's something that we've been continuing to hear,
6		ah I think it is a sad loss for the party/
7		a=nd I think tha=t um her journey here alongside us um in the crossbench,
8		and the work that we can all contribute to is so important.
9	KG:	Following Lidia Thorpe's resignation,
10		you became the Greens' First Nations spokesperson.
11		What have been your priorities in this new role?
12	DC:	My priorities have been uh seeing through the missing and murdered um women and
13		children's enquiry and (.) that was something that I <A signalled in my first speech A>
14		in the Senate.

Source: *Living Black*, https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/watch/2222895171543

In the formal interview, Karla Grant directs the focus of the conversation, encouraging Senator Dorinda Cox to talk about her new role as First Nations spokesperson for the Greens after the resignation of Senator Lidia

Sets up the context of the formal interaction.

Thorpe from the party. Grant uses the interrogatives ‘was that a loss for the party?’ (line 2) and ‘What have been your priorities in this new role?’ (line 11) to manage and develop the topics within the conversation, and to indicate when she is relinquishing the floor to Cox. Cox uses the discourse particle ‘look’ (line 3) to establish that she is taking the floor, while also acknowledging the sensitive nature of Thorpe’s conflicting viewpoint. She is also ambiguous in a euphemistic way, with the noun phrase ‘the work that Lidia has agreed to go on and continue to do’ (line 3) to minimise her opposing position.

Identifies relevant examples with appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses how the example contributes to topic management.

Analyses how the example contributes to turn-taking.

Explores the role of euphemism.

Develop your understanding 9.2

Read the following transcript, taken from an episode of the SBS current affairs news show *Insight*, titled ‘Not in my backyard’. In the episode, Amon (A) and Jonathon (J) discuss the housing crisis with the host (H). In this text, nimbyism (line 4) refers to people who don’t want more housing developments in the area in which they live. Answer the questions that follow.

1 A: That will mean that that town will potentially have enough customers,
2 for businesses to start in that area and that will mean (.) more opportunities
3 for me.
4 H: Is nimbyism (.) directly affecting housing supply in your view?
5 A: Nimbyism is absolutely having an impact on housing supply,
6 and we’re in a housing crisis right now.
7 Sydney is maybe the fourth (.) least affordable city in the world,
8 and that’s hollowing the city out.
9 It means that cleaners, teachers, nurses, cops, firies, people that we
10 definitely need (.) to make our city work can’t afford to live in our city.
11 On a very basic level (.) the average income in Sydney will not buy you,
12 the average house (.) in Sydney.
13 H: Jonathon you’re the lea=d organiser for the group called ‘YIMBY in
14 Melbourne’, that’s ‘Yes In My Back Yard’ (.)
15 you advocate for more housing/
16 How should we go about that?
17 J: I think um= one of the clear messages that YIMBY groups sort of <A around
18 Australia are putting out A> is that we need to build up (.) not out.

Source: *Insight*, https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/watch/2246643779692

1 Identify when the host, Amon and Jonathon change topics throughout their conversation. Label your examples with metalanguage.

2 How were the changes in topic achieved?

3 What do the topic management strategies used reveal about the participants?

4 Write a short paragraph analysing how the style of turn-taking contributes to the overall formality of the text.

Discourse factors and cohesion and coherence in formal texts

Formal texts can often be identified by their high level of **cohesion** and **coherence**. This is partly because they can be planned and considered before release, but mostly because the tenor drives the need for high levels of cohesion and coherence.

In formal texts, we cannot always assume shared experiences upon which inference can be made, so clarity needs to be presented within the discourse. This may be because of the broad audience or a wide social distance between the writer/speaker and their audience. In written texts, the readership may not even be known at all, and there could be a long time lapse between when a text is written and when it is read, such that contextual assumptions cannot be relied upon, either. Thus, formal texts often feature many factors that contribute to their coherence and cohesion.

→ See pages 5–11 to see explanations of cohesion and coherence.

Factors that contribute to a text's cohesion in formal texts

Cohesion is achieved in formal texts through the selection and arrangement of words and sentences to form a united and connected message. Attention to word types such as adverbials and conjunctions, as well as specific and targeted nouns and verbs (jargon), contribute to a formal text being unified. Also, while repetition may be used to compound an idea, substitution and ellipsis may be used to avoid redundancy and overused phrasing. The following table lists some of the common cohesive devices employed in formal texts.

Cohesion factor	Formal text presentation
Lexical choice	Using vocabulary that is clear, concise and relevant to the topic at hand, which includes synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, hypernymy and jargon.
Collocation	Increasing cohesion for a specific audience within a certain context through the use of co-occurring words. For example, business jargon tends to include a lot of collocation, such as 'middle management', 'land a deal' and 'circle back', which increases efficiency and clarity among co-workers.
Information flow	Presenting information in a way that will maximise the audience's understanding, especially given there is usually less opportunity for audiences to seek clarification in formal texts. This can include clefting, front focus and end focus.
Referencing	Organising information for the audience and avoiding repetition through anaphoric, cataphoric and deictic referencing.
Repetition	Used intentionally to ensure that the audience understands the speaker or writer's main arguments. Repetition can also be used to emphasise key points, or to create rhythm.
Substitution	The careful planning and editing of texts to reduce unnecessary repetitiveness while still being clear, through the replacement of words.
Ellipsis	Used when a word is assumed to be understood in context, as a way of avoiding repetition, although it is less common than in informal texts.
Conjunctions	Tying phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs together to improve clarity for the audience. Formal texts avoid using conjunctions to begin sentences (unlike informal texts).
Adverbials	Often acts to signpost the order of the text, improving the overall flow for readers or listeners.

Factors that contribute to a text's coherence in formal texts

Coherence in formal texts is often very pronounced to ensure the message is equally accessible to everyone within an indeterminate audience. Some texts by their very nature need to be highly coherent for the purposes of clarity, such as instruction manuals, emergency information posters and infographics. Other texts may use those conventions of coherence that are intended for clarity to obscure information. Brands that aim to replicate their more famous competitors to springboard their own sales use similar elements of coherence to confuse the less discerning eye.

Coherence factor	Formal text presentation
Cohesion	The elements of cohesion found in formal texts, discussed in the table on page 131, form one aspect of a text's coherence.
Inference	Using inference to help the audience make connections that may not be explicit in the text. However, many formal texts are addressed to an audience from varying backgrounds, which impacts the level of shared contextual understanding, so there tends to be a greater reliance on explicit communication for clarity.
Logical ordering	Crafting how information is released by making the content easy to follow. A high level of logical ordering demonstrates that the text is likely more formal as it has been planned to flow in a logical manner.
Formatting	Maintaining text conventions in formatting, as the expected positioning and appearance of the information contributes to the ease in which it can be found. Formatting in formal texts can also be influenced by the text's functions.
Consistency	Consistency in a formal text includes, but is not limited to, conventions such as spelling, punctuation, tense, voice and referencing. Consistency also includes the manner in which the audience is addressed and how the intents and purposes of the speaker/writer are communicated.
Conventions	Formal texts closely adhere to conventions, as the audience's familiarity with these reduces the cognitive load required to interpret the text. Texts that adhere to conventions can also communicate authority and expertise, indicating an established knowledge and familiarity of the required expectations.

Tip

When writing about the logical ordering of a text, analyse which linguistic features have been used to create the order. Avoid just repeating the content of the text.

Worked example

The following text is from page 8 of the 'Overall fuel hazard assessment guide – 4th edition', published by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment. It is written for firefighters, land asset managers and other fire behaviour analysists, to assist in rapid visual assessment of fuel arrangement in the environment, as well as bushfire preparation.

1 **2.3 Assessment based on key attributes of fuel hazard**

2 A fuel hazard rating of Low, Moderate, High, Very High or Extreme is assigned to each
3 fuel layer by assessing it against the key attributes listed below.

4 **Key attribute**

5 **Horizontal continuity of the layer**
6 Determines how readily a piece of burning fuel may ignite the fuel beside it.
7 Identifies which of surface, near-surface or elevated fuels will determine the
8 average flame height.

9 **Vertical continuity of the layer**
10 Determines how readily a piece of burning fuel may ignite the fuel above it.

11 **Amount of dead material in the layer**
12 Determines how much dead material is present to burn and thus help with
13 igniting the live (green) fuels.

14 **Thickness of the fuel pieces**
15 Determines whether the fuel pieces will burn in the flaming front of the fire.

16 **Total weight of fine fuel**
17 Determines the weight of fine fuel contributing to the flaming front of the fire.

18 The descriptions in the hazard assessment tables do not cover all possible
19 combinations of the key attributes. Users will need to exercise judgement and make an
20 assessment using all key attributes when actual conditions fit between the descriptions.

Source: Francis Hines, Kevin G Tolhurst, Andrew AG Wilson and Gregory J McCarthy, https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/21110/Report-82-overall-fuel-assess-guide-4th-ed.pdf

The Victorian publication uses formal language to clearly communicate information to assist fire management personnel in managing fire risk, and to emphasise the potential severity of fuel hazards. The text uses accessible formatting through the construction of a list with the clear heading 'Key attribute' (line 4), to clearly outline the attributes of fuel hazards that are being presented to the audience. This formatting also contributes to the logical ordering of the text, as it signposts the order of information, from the ignition of fuel (the beginning) on line 6, to how a burning fire is sustained (the end)

Identifies context for the discussion.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Identifies how the examples contribute to cohesion and coherence.

on line 17. When combined with the consistent use of sentence fragments such as ‘Determines how readily ...’ (line 10) and ‘Identifies which of surface ...’ (line 7), these features remove ambiguity, ensuring coherence within the text. This avoidance of ambiguity is further pursued through the reference to the list of ‘Low, Moderate, High, Very High or Extreme’ (line 2), which are state and federal conventions of categorising fire hazard, a reference that most Australian audiences would understand. The publication also uses the cohesive tie of repetition; for example, the noun ‘fuel’ (line 1) is repeated throughout the piece, to enhance clarity by using specificity to remove any potential room for misunderstanding by the audience.

Tip

When analysing your chosen feature of cohesion or coherence, remember to label these and include examples from the text, as well as provide explanations of how they are used and why the writer or speaker has chosen to use them.

Develop your understanding 9.3

1 The following text is an extract from the poem ‘Halfway down’ by AA Milne. Read the extract and find examples of the cohesive features written in the following table.

Halfway down the stairs
is a stair
where I sit.
there isn’t any
other stair
quite like
it.
I’m not at the bottom,
I’m not at the top;
so this is the stair
where
I always
stop.

Source: AA Milne, https://allpoetry.com/Halfway-Down

The first entry has been completed for you.

Metalanguage	Example	Effect
Repetition	'stair' (lines 1, 2, 5 and 10)	Emphasises the physical location of the narrator.
Antonymy		
Anaphoric reference		
Conjunction		
Front focus		
Ellipsis		
Conventions		
Formatting		

2 The following text is an extract of a description of a house for sale on the property website *Domain*. Read the excerpt then answer the questions below.

> Brilliantly crafted to maximise its northern aspect and fill its proportions with streams of natural light, the home flows past an impressive study / home office, a formal lounge and dining, each with easy visual connections to a paved and sun filled, north-facing courtyard. At the rear of the home, the flow culminates in a Neff and Bosch-equipped kitchen / meals with a walk-in pantry and further connection to a sunny deck that has also been crafted for lovers of alfresco living.

Source: *Domain*, https://www.domain.com.au/24-denham-place-toorak-vic-3142-2018664664

a Annotate the features that contribute to cohesion and coherence in the text.

b Construct an analysis of your findings, focusing on how these specific language features work together to create cohesion and coherence.

CHAPTER
10

Analysing formal texts

During your study of English Language, you can be assessed through any one or a combination of the following tasks: a folio of annotated texts, an essay, an investigative report, an analytical commentary and short-answer questions. Refer to Chapter 18 on pages 219–43 to learn how to approach each of these tasks.

This chapter includes one written and one spoken text, and provides practice for each task, with a focus on Unit 3, Area of Study 2: Formality.

Essay topic

Write an essay that responds to the following topic. Refer to the stimulus material provided.

Stimulus A

'Never underestimate the power of the spoken word. The language we use has an impact on the social narrative around us. Changing our language to be more inclusive can change the perception of those living with disabilities and how they are treated by the general public. What's more, we can use it to adjust the systemic structures in society.'

'The ultimate guide to inclusive language for disabilities', Maple Community Services, <www.mapleservices.com.au>

Stimulus B

'In this experiment (*N = 650*), we examine the negative consequences of jargon on individuals' perceptions of emerging scientific technology and aim to explain these effects. We find that the presence of jargon impairs people's ability to process scientific information, and that this impairment leads to greater motivated resistance to persuasion, increased risk perceptions, and lower support for technology adoption.'

Olivia M Bullock, David Colón Amill, Hillary C Shulman and Graham N Dixon, 'Jargon as a barrier to effective science communication: Evidence from metacognition', *Public Understanding of Science*, vol. 28, no. 7, <www.pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>, 2019, p.845

'Use of formal language in both spoken and written discourse creates a division in society.'

Discuss whether this is true in the Australian context. Refer to at least two subsystems in your response.

Investigative report

Examine and analyse how formal language is used in political discourse in the Australian context. You will need to develop a research question, e.g. 'How is the expression of the Australian identity in politics impacting the formality of language being used?' or 'How does [politician] use formal language to construct their relationship with the Australian public?'. Collect a range of examples, such as written documentation from political correspondences and/or transcriptions of relevant extracts from political speeches and interviews.

Analyse your documents and/or transcripts, identifying relevant features of formal language and observing how these features are being used. Construct a written report or equivalent presentation including an introduction, methodology, findings, analysis and conclusion. Reference any quotes or ideas using an appropriate citation style.

Annotating texts

Annotate the formal features of **Text 1** (pages 138–9) or **Text 2** (page 139).

Short-answer questions

Refer to **Text 1** on pages 138–9 and answer the following questions.

1. Identify a function of the text. Provide two examples with appropriate metalanguage to support your response. (2 marks)
2. Describe the register of the article and provide two different examples of formal language features that support this. (3 marks)
3. Explain how modal verbs in this media release contribute to one of its purposes. (3 marks)
4. Identify two factors that contribute to the text's cohesion and explain how they do this. (4 marks)

Refer to **Text 2** on page 139 and answer the following questions.

1. Describe one purpose of the text. (1 marks)
2. Identify and label an example of syntactic patterning in lines 13–20. Explain how this syntactic feature contributes to one purpose of the text. (2 marks)
3. Using appropriate metalanguage, describe how the register of the text is influenced by the situational context. (3 marks)
4. Analyse the discourse factors that contribute to coherence within the text. Use appropriate metalanguage and line numbers in your response. (4 marks)

Analytical commentary

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of **Text 1** (pages 138–9) or **Text 2** (page 139). Use appropriate metalanguage and include line numbers in your response. Consider the following:

- the register of the text, including the influence of tenor and audience
- the function/s and purpose/s of the text, and how these are achieved using formal language features
- how the situational and cultural contexts have informed the language features present
- how cohesion and coherence have been achieved using formal discourse features
- the role of spoken discourse strategies and features (Text 2).

Scan the code or click here to view answers to the short-answer questions and the analytical commentary.

Text 1

The following media release about the purchase of the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines was jointly issued by the offices of the Hon. Richard Marles MP, Minister for Defence, and Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister of Australia, on 14 March 2023. Scan the code or click here to read the full joint media release.

1 Australia and the UK will deliver SSN-AUKUS, a new conventionally-armed nuclear-powered
2 submarine, based on a UK design, incorporating cutting edge Australian, UK and US
3 technologies. The UK will deliver its own first SSN-AUKUS in the late 2030s, with the first
4 SSN-AUKUS built in Australia delivered in the early 2040s.
5 We expect the phased approach will result in $6 billion invested in Australia’s industrial
6 capability and workforce over the next four years, creating around 20,000 direct jobs over
7 the next 30 years.
8 This whole of nation effort also presents a whole of nation opportunity; for new jobs, new
9 industries, and new expertise in science, technology, and cyber.
10 Businesses right across the country in every state and territory will have the opportunity to
11 contribute to and benefit from these opportunities over decades.
12 Over the next four years, this will see $2 billion in expected investment into South Australia,
13 and a further $1 billion in Western Australia.
14 This commitment from the Australian Government will require funding for the phased approach
15 to amount to around 0.15 per cent of GDP per year, averaged over the life of the program.

Our plan elevates Australia's industrial capacity to produce and sustain advanced SSNs, alongside our AUKUS partners.

Source: Licensed from the Commonwealth of Australia under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence.

Text 2

The following text is a transcript of a wedding ceremony between Rayna (R) and William (W), performed by a marriage celebrant (C).

See page 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

C: <F Welcome everybody F> (.) and thank you for attending this wo=nderful occasion\
Rayna (.) William and I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners,
of the land on which we meet today (.) and pay our respects to Elders past and present\
Today (.) Rayna and William formally pledge their commitment to each other\
This is the first <A and best A> day of their new life (.) and it is important to them,
that we are here to bear witness to their love.
Now the declaration of intent\
Do you (.) Rayna (.) take William (.) to be your lawfully wedded husband?
To have and to hold (..) in sickness and in health (..) in good times (.) and difficult times,
for as lo=ng as you both shall live?

R: <F I do/ F>

C: And do you (.) William (.) take Rayna to be your lawfully wedded wife?
To have and to hold (..) in sickness and in health (.) in good times (.) and difficult times,
for as long as you both shall live?

W: <L I do\ L>

C: A ring is a circle of love that is never-ending (.) so each time you glance at your ring,
you will be forever reminded of the love and joy felt today.
Rayna (..) place the ring on William's finger and repeat after me\
William (.) I give you this ring as a symbol of my permanent and wholehearted love/

R: William (.) I give you this ring as a symbol (.) of my permanent and wholehearted love\

C: <A And now William A> (.) place the ring on Rayna's finger and repeat after me\
Rayna (.) I give you this ring as a symbol of my passionate and unwavering love/

W: <A Rayna I give you this ring as a symbol of my passionate and unwavering love A>

C: Marriage (.) according to the law in Australia (.) is the union of two people,
to the exclusion of a=ll others (.) voluntarily entered into for life.
Before these witnesses (.) you have now pledged to be joined in marriage.
<F By the authority vested in me by the State of Victoria I pronounce you married! F>

UNIT 4

Language variation and identity

English Language Unit 4 examines how language reflects our unique individual and group identities. We explore the different varieties of English used within Australian society, studying their roles in establishing an Australian national identity, as well as their ability to reflect a language user's identity. We also look at how idiolects and sociolects can construct, demonstrate and negotiate people's personal identities and broader group identities.

Through studying Unit 4, you will learn how to identify different Australian Englishes, investigate language choices that reflect both personal and group identities, and analyse how identity is communicated in a variety of different situational and cultural contexts.

CHAPTER 11

Language, identity and group membership

In Unit 4, you will study language variation and identity. You will explore how a range of identities are expressed through texts and the various elements that influence how and why these identities are performed. In Chapters 12–14 we examine a range of Australian Englishes, and in Chapters 15–17 we explore how linguistic boundaries are drawn around individual and group identities based on users' wants and needs.

Language and identity construction

We each act in ways to signify aspects of our identity. As such, we can present particular representations of ourselves. You might want others to perceive you as intelligent, hardworking, funny and kind-hearted, and consequently exhibit behaviours to emphasise some or all of these qualities. For example, if you wish to present yourself as intelligent, you might read a lot of books; or you might tell jokes if you want to present yourself as funny.

Language is an important way through which we can express our identity. Through our selection of linguistic features, we can attempt to control how an audience perceives us, and be credited with all the values and attitudes of the particular identity we are trying to convey.

The types of identities we portray will also vary depending on context. An applicant at a job interview in an accounting firm, for instance, would wish to present themselves as knowledgeable, professional and competent. They might use appropriate accounting jargon such as 'fiscal year', 'abatement' and 'sale-leaseback agreement', in combination with syntactic and prosodic features such as standard sentence construction and deliberate use of pitch, intonation and stress to present an authoritative persona. All of these language features work together to help establish this identity in the mind of the interviewer. However, if the applicant were to meet with their friends afterwards, they would likely adapt their language to fit within this social group. Instead of using a professional register, they may choose more informal language by using slang or swearing to demonstrate their membership of their friendship group. Organisations, too, can have a particular identity that they wish to be associated with, and they can convey this through the language in their marketing emails, social media posts and advertisements.

Individuals don't always consciously control how their language reflects their identity. Subconscious language features are also demonstrative of a person's background, beliefs, attitudes and personality. Some people may struggle to adjust their accent, which could indicate where they spent the majority of their childhood, or they may employ colloquialisms that others subsequently interpret as markers of a group or location. For example, whether a person says 'swimmers', 'bathers' or 'togs' to refer to swimwear could indicate a background from New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland, respectively.

Language and group membership

Through its ability to reflect identity, the language we use can demonstrate commonalities with others, or highlight our differences.

Certain groups of people can be associated with identifiable language features, such as accents, lexical choices, syntactic constructions, grammars or discourse particles. These groups can be defined in numerous ways, such as through age, gender, occupation and background. Language users may want to indicate belonging to a particular group due to the power this affords them or to highlight how this aligns with their values and understanding of the world. For example, Australians travelling abroad might say 'g'day' more than usual, to establish their Australian identity in an international setting. Equally, individuals may use language to differentiate or distance themselves from another speech community or group. This would be evident when an adolescent deliberately chooses to use slang terms their parents do not understand. By selecting certain language features to reflect or avoid an identity, language can mark boundaries between those who are part of a group and those who are not.

Writing about language and identity

To prepare for essay writing, it can be helpful to pay attention to any areas of contention such as different attitudes towards contemporary language use and language change, both in this book and in the language examples you collect throughout your studies.

You will also need to be able to analyse texts when you respond to short-answer questions and write analytical commentaries. When writing analytically about language and identity, one method you could use is to carry out the following steps.

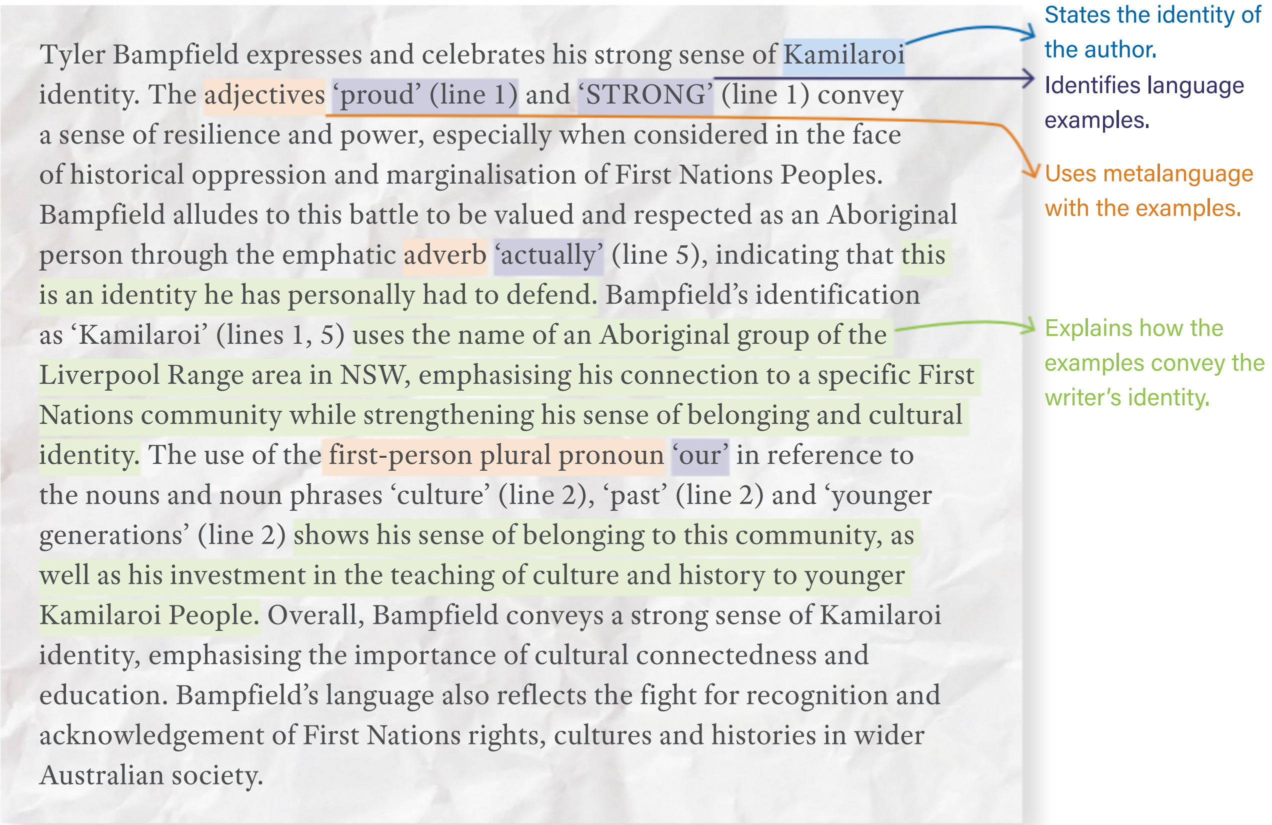
- Step 1 State the identity of the author.
- Step 2 Using metalanguage, identify specific examples of language that reflect the author's identity.
- Step 3 Explain how the language functions to convey the identity of the author.

Worked example

Consider the text below and the following analysis of how language is used to express identity.

1 I am a proud Kamilaroi man. Aboriginal to me means STRONG.
2 I want to see our culture and our past taught in our younger generations. Not only will these
3 change the stereotypes, it will bring back our culture and other young men and women will
4 begin to be proud of who they are as an Aboriginal just like I have since being taught about
5 my culture, my ancestor past and actually being recognised as a Kamilaroi man.

Source: Tyler Bampfield, https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/7430041/growing-up-indigenous-and-how-i-learned-to-be-a-proud-kamilaroi-man/



Tyler Bampfield expresses and celebrates his strong sense of Kamilaroi identity. The adjectives 'proud' (line 1) and 'STRONG' (line 1) convey a sense of resilience and power, especially when considered in the face of historical oppression and marginalisation of First Nations Peoples. Bampfield alludes to this battle to be valued and respected as an Aboriginal person through the emphatic adverb 'actually' (line 5), indicating that this is an identity he has personally had to defend. Bampfield's identification as 'Kamilaroi' (lines 1, 5) uses the name of an Aboriginal group of the Liverpool Range area in NSW, emphasising his connection to a specific First Nations community while strengthening his sense of belonging and cultural identity. The use of the first-person plural pronoun 'our' in reference to the nouns and noun phrases 'culture' (line 2), 'past' (line 2) and 'younger generations' (line 2) shows his sense of belonging to this community, as well as his investment in the teaching of culture and history to younger Kamilaroi People. Overall, Bampfield conveys a strong sense of Kamilaroi identity, emphasising the importance of cultural connectedness and education. Bampfield's language also reflects the fight for recognition and acknowledgement of First Nations rights, cultures and histories in wider Australian society.

States the identity of the author.

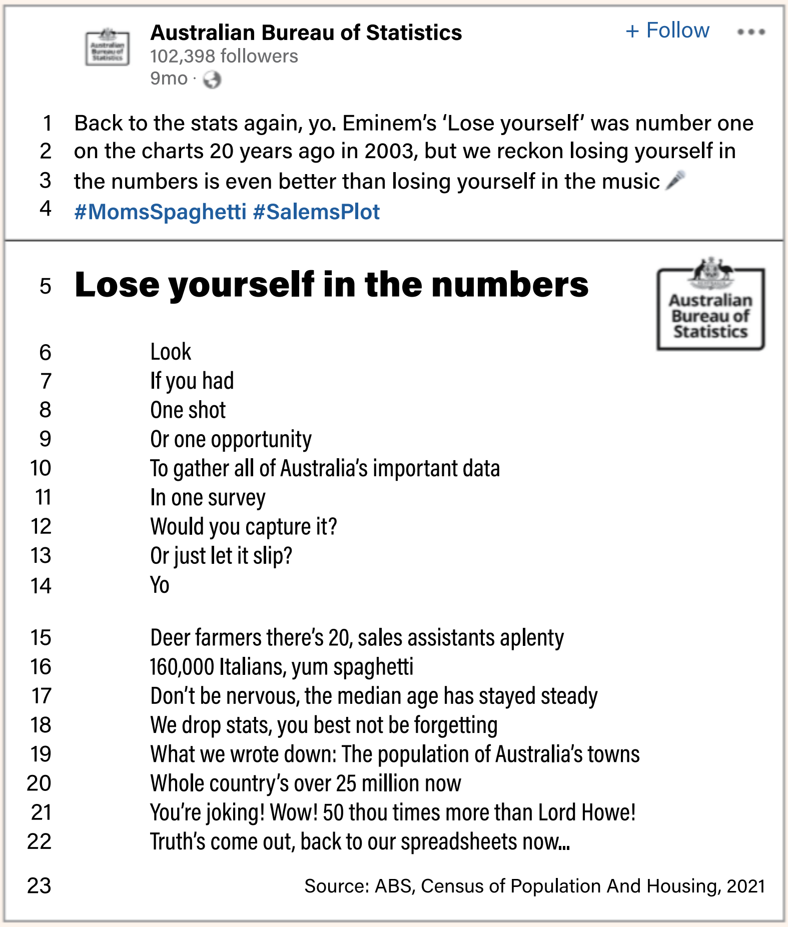
Identifies language examples.

Uses metalanguage with the examples.

Explains how the examples convey the writer's identity.

Develop your understanding 11.1

1. Scan the code or click here to watch the acceptance speech of the 2022 Young Australian of the Year, Dr Daniel Nour. In the speech, Nour reflects his identity as a doctor seeking to inspire others and help those in need.
   - a Identify specific examples of language that convey and reflect the identity of the speaker.
   - b Apply appropriate metalanguage to the examples you have identified.
   - c Write a short paragraph explaining how the examples convey and reflect the identity of the speaker.
2. In the following LinkedIn post, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) relies on readers' understanding of the cultural context of the popular song 'Lose Yourself' by Eminem. Write a short paragraph analysing how the use of language conveys a creative, playful and humorous identity.



Australian Bureau of Statistics
102,398 followers
9mo ·

Back to the stats again, yo. Eminem's 'Lose yourself' was number one on the charts 20 years ago in 2003, but we reckon losing yourself in the numbers is even better than losing yourself in the music 🎤
#MomsSpaghetti #SalemsPlot

Lose yourself in the numbers

Look
If you had
One shot
Or one opportunity
To gather all of Australia's important data
In one survey
Would you capture it?
Or just let it slip?
Yo

Deer farmers there's 20, sales assistants aplenty
160,000 Italians, yum spaghetti
Don't be nervous, the median age has stayed steady
We drop stats, you best not be forgetting
What we wrote down: The population of Australia's towns
Whole country's over 25 million now
You're joking! Wow! 50 thou times more than Lord Howe!
Truth's come out, back to our spreadsheets now...

Source: ABS, Census of Population And Housing, 2021

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/absstats_momsspaghetti-salemsplot-activity-7028890147848916992-A5R8?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Now that you've reached Unit 4, it's a good idea to make sure that you're staying on top of your revision. Scan the code or click here for a guide to studying English Language, on our webpage of further resources.

UNIT

4

Language variation and identity

Area of Study 1: Language variation in Australian society

Unit 4, Area of Study 1 examines the different varieties of English that are used within Australian society, including Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects.

The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- the features of Standard Australian English and its role in Australian society
- the ways in which a variety of identities are conveyed and reflected in Australian texts
- the evolution of Broad, General and Cultivated Australian English accents
- how English varies according to culture, including Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects
- attitudes within Australian society to different varieties of English, including prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes
- how English in Australian society is influenced by global contact and modern technologies
- the role of language in conveying a perceived national identity
- metalanguage to discuss varieties of English in Australian society.

The key knowledge points ‘the ways in which a variety of identities are conveyed and reflected in Australian texts’ and ‘metalanguage to discuss varieties of English in Australian society’ are covered throughout the chapters for this area of study. Chapter 12 explores Standard Australian English and discusses the Australian national identity. Chapter 13 investigates Australian Englishes, including migrant ethnolects and Aboriginal Australian Englishes. It also examines the different attitudes towards Australian Englishes within Australian society.

This area of study requires you to identify, describe and analyse the various types of English that are used by speakers and writers in Australia, and the various perceptions of these Englishes in Australian society. Chapter 14 provides practice for all the major types of assessment you may face, with a focus on language varieties in an Australian context.

* Key knowledge points are © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

CHAPTER 12

English and Australian national identity

In this chapter, we look at the concept of Standard Australian English in contemporary Australian society, as well as features that are typically associated with the Australian national identity. We cover the evolution of the Australian accent and examine attitudes towards the accent and how they have changed. We also investigate the role of language in conveying a perceived national identity and reflect on some of the stereotypes that have prevailed in Australian society in relation to our national character. Finally, we explore how global contact and modern technologies have shaped and continue to influence the development of English in Australian society.

Key knowledge covered:

- the features of Standard Australian English and its role in Australian society
- the evolution of Broad, General and Cultivated Australian English accents
- the role of language in conveying a perceived national identity
- how English in Australian society is influenced by global contact and modern technologies

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Australian Englishes	Varieties of English that are unique to Australia. There are three main types studied in Year 12 VCE English Language: Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects. (Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects are discussed in Chapter 13.)
Hypocoristic use of suffixes	The process of shortening, modifying or altering words from their original form by adding a suffix such as '-o' and '-ie' (e.g. 'servo' for 'service station' or 'sunnies' for 'sunglasses'). In doing so, a more colloquial expression is created.

Standard Australian English (SAE)	The variety of spoken and written English language in Australia that represents a common language standard agreed to by the general population and codified in dictionaries, style guides and grammar manuals. Standard Australian English represents a prestige variety in the Australian context.* *This definition is reproduced from the VCE English Language Study Design 2024–2028.
Accent	Refers to the distinctive sounds someone makes when they pronounce words. These particular pronunciations are influenced by location, age and social differences. In Australian English, the three main accents are Broad, General and Cultivated.

Australian Englishes

There is a rich diversity of Englishes in Australia, reflecting the country's multifaceted cultural heritage and history. Australian Englishes is the umbrella term to describe the varieties of English spoken in Australia. In this course, the varieties of Australian English we will consider are **Standard Australian English (SAE)**, **Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAEs)** and **migrant ethnolects**. AAEs and migrant ethnolects are discussed in Chapter 13, and SAE is discussed below and on the following pages.

Australian Englishes have distinguishing features that set them apart from Englishes spoken in other parts of the world. For example, the **hypocoristic use of suffixes** is characteristic of Australian Englishes. This is the shortening of terms with the addition of a morpheme at the end, which has the effect of reducing the formality of speech, adding connotations of friendliness and approachability, or removing connotations of being imposing or grand. In Australia, there is a preference to construct these by reducing the lexeme to a single syllable and then adding a suffix in the form of '-o' or '-ey'/'-ie'/'-y', for example 'Albo' rather than 'Anthony Albanese' or 'U-ey' in place of 'U-turn'.

Standard Australian English

SAE is the variety of English that has been recorded in Australian linguistic resources such as dictionaries and handbooks for grammar usage.

SAE generally follows British English rather than American English spelling conventions. The letter 'u', for example, is retained in words like 'colour' and 'behaviour', and the '-ise' suffix in words like 'organise' and 'specialise' is used instead of the '-ize' suffix. Similarly, SAE spells with double consonants in words such as 'cancelled' and 'travelled', which are 'canceled' and 'traveled' in American English. SAE also has some differences from British English. The SAE spelling of the word 'program' is different from the British spelling, in that British English retains double consonants in 'programme'. When determining SAE spelling preferences, it is best to refer to Australian dictionaries such as the *Australian*

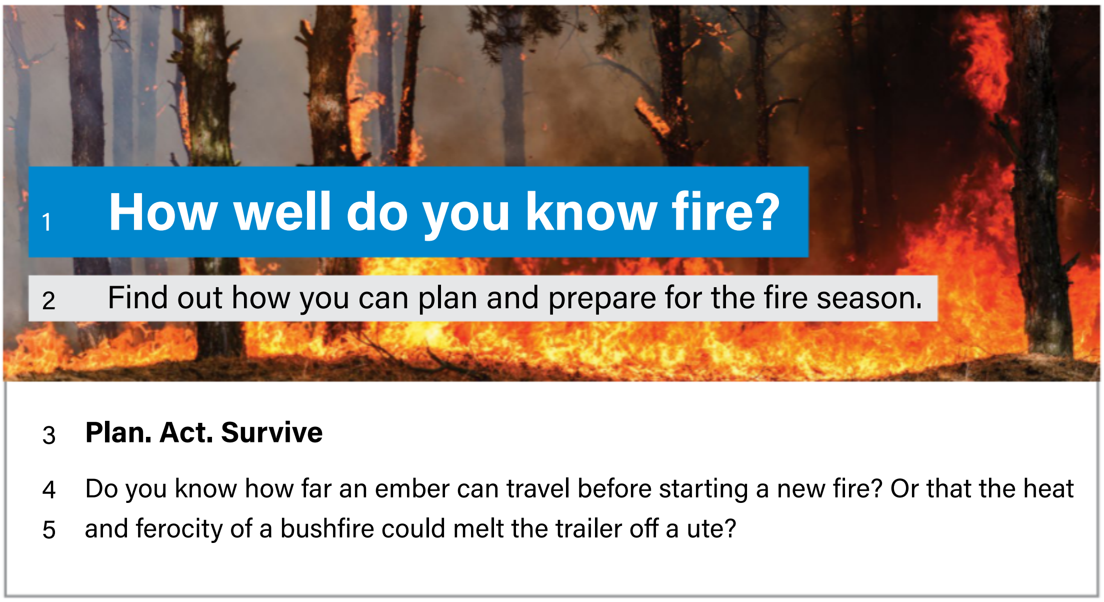
Concise Oxford Dictionary and the *Macquarie Dictionary*. SAE also has some unique lexical differences compared to varieties of English in other parts of the world. A common example is observed in the word 'runner' which is used in some parts of Australia to describe footwear, compared with the American 'sneaker' and British 'trainer'.

In Australia, SAE represents a prestige variety. This is because it is the form of English that is typically used by those in positions of power and, as a result, it has gained a reputation for being associated with education, intelligence and social status. When SAE is used in formal public contexts such as government or the media, it is important that it is easily understandable for a wide audience. As such, coherence strategies are commonly adopted with the aim of providing clarity. In these contexts, SAE is typically structured in a logical manner with attention paid to formatting, grammar, syntax and vocabulary. The language tends to be precise and consistent, with a focus on conveying information clearly and professionally.

However, it is important to keep in mind that SAE is not always concerned with formality. Formality and informality in language relate to style and are influenced by context. Even when SAE is used in formal contexts, it can sometimes include informal features. For example, the colloquial greeting 'g'day' is considered to be part of SAE as it is commonly used and understood by Australians as a casual 'hello' – an informal contraction of 'good day'.

Worked example

The text below was published on the Victorian Government website. Consider the following analysis of why SAE was employed.



1 **How well do you know fire?**

2 Find out how you can plan and prepare for the fire season.

3 **Plan. Act. Survive**

4 Do you know how far an ember can travel before starting a new fire? Or that the heat
5 and ferocity of a bushfire could melt the trailer off a ute?

Source: State Government of Victoria, https://www.vic.gov.au/how-well-do-you-know-fire

This text is written in Standard Australian English and employs grammar and spelling conventions widely understood by a general Australian audience. The text is composed of interrogative sentences that inquire about the reader's knowledge of fire. Following a standard syntactic structure with the verb 'do', the adverb 'how' and a question mark, the interrogative on line 4 functions to inquire about the reader's specific awareness of the ease with which bushfires can spread. The following interrogative draws on cohesion devices, with the conjunction 'or', to tie back to the previous idea and connect it with the new information – the destructive potential of a bushfire to 'melt the trailer off a ute' (lines 4–5). The lexemes 'bushfire' and 'ute' (a colloquial shortening for 'utility truck') make the text contextually relevant to an Australian audience as these words are distinctively part of the Australian lexicon. Overall, the text has a clear focus on conveying important information about the dangers of bushfire in a concise and accurate way using Standard Australian English that is suitable for the Australian public.

Identifies the text as Standard Australian English.

Identifies the main language features present in the text.

Explains the functions of the language features.

In informal contexts such as everyday conversations with friends and family, SAE can be used in a casual manner, with increased use of colloquial language and less attention paid to strict grammar rules. Many hypocoristic suffixes have become so widespread in their usage that they are now considered a part of the SAE lexicon. For example, the Australian terms 'arvo' and 'tradie' are hypocoristic forms of the words 'afternoon' and 'tradesperson', respectively.

Tip

Throughout your studies, collect examples of SAE in a range of texts and contexts. This can include Australian news outlets, books, television shows and advertisements. Focus on explaining how the language used ensures clarity and accessibility for a range of audiences in an Australian context. You can draw on this collection to use as examples for your essays on SAE.

Develop your understanding 12.1

The text below is a transcript of the opening of an audio story by the ABC. The story begins with a reporter describing 65-year-old Australian Rules football player Stephen Giles, interspersed with audio clips of Giles speaking about his history with the sport. Analyse the language use in the transcript for evidence of SAE. Scan the code or click here to listen to the recording.

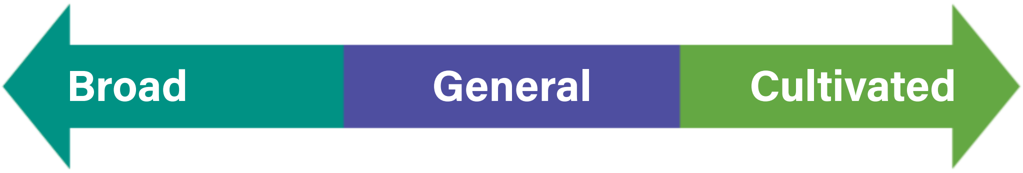
1	Reporter:	Caramut (.) Western Victoria,
2		Meet the terminator of local sport\
3	Stephen Giles:	My first game was in 1966 (.) for the club.
4	Reporter:	When he's on a mission/
5	Stephen Giles:	Made a comeback at forty 'cause I (.) was enjoying it.
6	Reporter:	(...) nothing else will do.
7	Stephen Giles:	Play a bit of golf (...) but it's not the same really.
8	Reporter:	His name (.) is Stephen Giles.
9	Stephen Giles:	At 60 I thought (.) that would be a good time to call it quits.
10	Reporter:	His game (.) is country footy/
11	Stephen Giles:	But then I thought well (...) I might just have a kick.

Source: Daniel Miles and Richard Crabtree, https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/storystream/playing-footy-for-57-years/102721124

The Australian accent

The Australian accent is very recognisable and distinct, and it serves as a strong symbol of national identity. It has undergone significant changes throughout its history, with regional variations and social factors contributing to its evolution.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Australian accent went through a process of differentiation, where different levels of 'broadness' emerged, giving rise to the **Broad**, **General** and **Cultivated** Australian accents.



The Broad accent is stereotypically known for its tendency towards elision and assimilation in its consonants. For example, 'Australian' tends to be pronounced as 'Strayan'.

Scan the code or click here to view a video example of Senator Jacqui Lambie speaking in a Broad Australian accent.

The General accent is the most commonly spoken accent in Australia and is heard in mainstream media, such as modern news programs.

Scan the code or click here to view a video example of actor Chris Hemsworth speaking in a General Australian accent.

The Cultivated accent is a style that is patterned after the formerly prestigious British accent known as Received Pronunciation (RP). It is no longer very commonly spoken.

Scan the code or click here to view a video example of former prime minister Malcolm Fraser speaking in a Cultivated Australian accent.

Historical attitudes to the accents

With the emergence of the different accent varieties came attitudes attached to each level of broadness.

The Broad accent was associated with the working class and was seen as a marker of a lack of education or refinement. It was associated with rural and bush settings. However, in reality, many people living in rural locations were speaking with a General accent, challenging this stereotype. At the other end of the accent continuum, the Cultivated accent was the most prestigious and was associated with the upper class and education.

Contemporary attitudes to the accents

The General accent is the predominant accent spoken by most modern Australians. This reflects a departure from the extremes of the accent continuum. As Australian society has undergone evolution and transformation, the significance of social class has diminished. Although accent variation was previously a prominent marker of social class distinction, it has become less critical to possess a specific Australian accent for signalling individual social status.

A General accent is frequently categorised as homogenous (meaning ‘all the same’) due to its prevalence among the majority of Australians. Some factors that have contributed to the widespread use of a General accent are its popularisation in Australian films, television media and music, and its widespread use in the Australian education system.

In contemporary Australia, stereotypes continue to influence how accents – particularly a Cultivated and Broad accent – are received.

	Broad	General	Cultivated
Work ethic	hardworking	balanced	reliant on others
Trustworthiness	trustworthy	trustworthy	untrustworthy
Social class	lower class	middle class	upper class
Education	uneducated	educationally diverse	educated
Culture	uncultured	culturally aware	cultured
Residence	outer urban and regional	urban and regional	urban
Pronunciation	lazy	clear	refined

Common stereotypes depict Australians as having an overly nasal sounding accent with a distinctive rising pitch and exaggerated diphthongs. Evidence of this can be observed in the Australian television series *Kath & Kim*, created by Jane Turner and Gina Riley. The famous and popular phrase ‘look at me’, sounding more like ‘look at moi’, frequently used by character Kath Day-Knight, contains evidence of an exaggerated diphthong. Using the Harrington, Cox and Evans system for phonetic transcription, Kath’s pronunciation of the word ‘me’ would be written as [moɪ].

Despite the persistence of some negative attitudes to the Australian accent, there is evidence of more positive ones. With the rise of social media, there has been a considerable uptick of instructional videos that educate followers on ‘how to speak with an Australian accent’. The number of these videos on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok suggests that demand is great and therefore the Australian accent is perceived positively by many people.

Tip

When gathering examples of attitudes to the Australian accent, look for instances where commentary includes value judgements and opinions about the accent.

Worked example

Consider the following discussion on varied attitudes to the Australian accent. The discussion was inspired by a TikTok trend relating to the Australian cartoon series *Bluey*.

In early 2023, an audio clip from the cartoon series *Bluey* went viral on the social media platform TikTok. In the episode in question, from season 3, the titular character's sister, Bingo, says: 'Airport, I'm not going to the airport'. Bingo's pronunciation of 'airport' reflects a strong Australian accent. Online news media outlets were quick to examine the range of responses the clip provoked. Monique Friedlander and Anthony James, in a *Daily Mail Australia* article, reflected on how American viewers mocked Bingo's Australian accent, calling it 'bizarre' and saying it caused a 'brain itch'. Notably, the article also identified the responses from Australians defending their accent, revealing their 'bewilderment' over the way international viewers responded to the pronunciation, given they perceived it as conventional. This signals a national pride in the way Australians sound when they speak.

Establishes context for the analysis.

Identifies the attitudes towards the language phenomenon.

Explains the significance of the attitude.

Tip

The *Australian voices* webpage at the Macquarie University website is an excellent resource for audio clips and the history of the Australian accent. Scan the code or click here to access the webpage.

Develop your understanding 12.2

1 Scan the code or click here to watch the video from *ABC News In-Depth* 'Do Australians have bad accents? 1961 v 2019'. In this video, you will see footage from a reporter in Sydney in 1961 along with footage from a reporter in Adelaide in 2019, asking people their opinions of the Australian accent.

   a Summarise the range of attitudes that people conveyed regarding the Australian accent in 1961 compared to those expressed in 2019.

   b Many of the people who appeared in the 2019 interview expressed their fondness for the Australian accent. Offer some conjecture as to why these opinions are commonly held.

2 Read the following articles that highlight attitudes to the Australian accent. For each article:

   - summarise the main points
   - consider how the attitudes expressed relate to changes in the accents over time
   - look through the comments below the articles to extract further views and opinions on the Australian accent.

Brooke Rolfe: 'How the Australian accent has changed without us knowing' Scan the code or click here to access the article.	Howard Manns and Kate Burridge: 'Oi! We're not lazy yarners, so let's kill the cringe and love our Aussie accent(s)' Scan the code or click here to access the article.	Rosalind Moran: 'You Beauty: The politics of singing in an Aussie accent' Scan the code or click here to access the article.

Perceptions of Australian national identity

An Australian national identity refers to the sense of shared culture, history, traditions, language and values that define Australia as a nation. It encompasses the beliefs, customs and practices that are seen as integral to the identity of Australia and is shaped by factors such as geography, politics, religion and social norms. Because Australia comprises a diverse range of individuals and groups, defining our national identity is a complex and challenging endeavour as it evolves and transforms alongside society. The perceptions of national identity in Australia can vary widely depending on who you ask and their individual experiences and perspectives.

However, there are common values and ideals typically associated with Australia's national identity, which have permeated across time. A few of these are explained in the following table.

Value	Explanation
Anti-authoritarianism	Negative attitudes to those in authority, especially those who exercise their power over others.
Anti-intellectualism	Negative attitudes to intellectuals or highly educated people, often based on the belief that they are out of touch with ordinary people.
Connection to land	An affiliation with the land and its natural features is often used as a symbol of national identity.
Connection to Country	For First Nations people, connection to Country is a central aspect of identity. Understanding one's relationship with Country, and place within the Dreaming and wider cosmos, enables a fundamental connection to identity in clan, tribal and national contexts.
Democratic values	The values that underpin our governance, including the freedom to vote or run for office, the freedom to gather and to participate in politics, the freedom to express opinions and beliefs, and the principle that everyone should be subject to the same laws and other basic human rights.

Egalitarianism	The idea that all individuals should have equal rights, opportunities and treatment, regardless of their social status, wealth or background. This includes equal access to education, healthcare, employment and other basic needs. This idea of egalitarianism is sometimes expressed in the phrase 'a fair go.'
Laid-back attitudes	Associated with the idea of taking things easy, not getting too stressed and enjoying life. Australians often perceive themselves as being friendly and easygoing.
Mateship	Reflects the values of loyalty, solidarity and friendship.
Multiculturalism	Refers to a society that is made up of many different cultures, ideally celebrating diversity and inclusiveness.

When we think about what it means to be Australian, we may have a simplified view of the people and their culture: a stereotype. This view can be influenced by the media, literature and the films that we see. There are stereotypes based on some of the values listed in the table above, including 'the larrikin' (an individual with a relaxed attitude, a willingness to challenge authority and a playful sense of humour) and 'the battler' (a working-class individual who exhibits resilience, resourcefulness, determination and courage while facing challenging circumstances).

However, it's important to remember that these perceptions and stereotypes of Australians are not necessarily true for everyone. For instance, a common stereotype is that Australians love sports and drinking beer – though a large portion of the population might not engage in such behaviours.

Source: domonabike, Alamy, https://www.alamy.com/2019-australian-rules-football-league-afl-grand-final-greater-western-sydney-gws-fans-having-pregame-drinks-at-coopers-inn-pub-melbourne-victoria-image329295996.html

Stereotypes can be harmful because they give an incomplete and inaccurate picture of Australian culture. They can also cause unfair treatment of individuals who do not fit into these stereotypes, and promote negative attitudes towards groups of people.

Language and Australian national identity

Language plays a crucial role in conveying Australian national identity by shaping how Australians communicate with each other, how they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. Australian values are promoted in different contexts and through different mediums, such as in politics, marketing, art, literature and the media. These signifiers of national identity are expressed through the variety of language features found across Australian Englishes, and may be communicated at a group or individual level.

Worked examples

Around election time, political slogans are imbued with Australian values. Consider how the values listed in the table on pages 154–5 are discussed in the following analyses of political slogans.

'A better future'

Australian Labor Party

The noun phrase uses optimistic language and suggests a positive vision of a more just and fair future for Australian society. The comparative adjective 'better' emphasises growth and improvement for all Australians, which is associated with egalitarian values – a 'fair go' for all. The use of the indefinite article 'a' shows that the Labor party is providing one option, but not the only option, reinforcing democratic values, as voters have a choice.

Identifies the language features in the text.

Identifies the values being expressed.

Analyses the function of the language feature.

'A stronger economy, a secure future'

Liberal Party of Australia

The Liberal Party's political slogan is composed of two noun phrases. The first noun phrase uses the adjective 'stronger' to emphasise the importance of growth and prosperity. Through its pairing with the noun 'economy', this statement implies a focus on economic development. The second noun phrase uses the adjective 'secure' to emphasise the importance of stability and safety. The noun 'future' suggests a long-term focus on sustaining the benefits of economic growth. The language implies that if we have a strong economy and secure future, everyone in Australia will benefit. This idea of fairness is connected to egalitarianism, which is the belief that everyone should have equal opportunities.

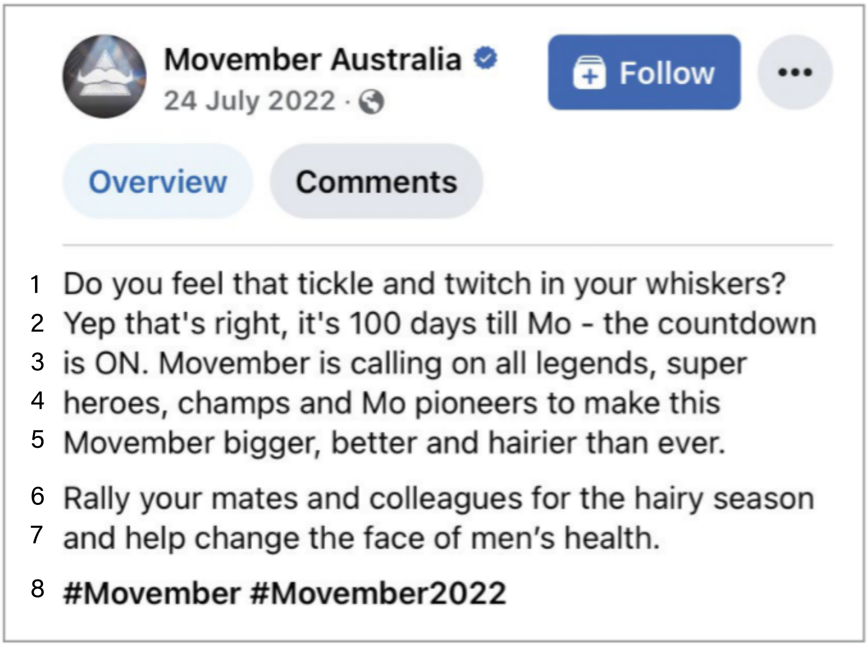
Identifies the language features in the text.

Analyses the functions of the language features.

Identifies the value being expressed.

Worked example

Advertising often relies on national identity to engage audiences. In a Facebook post on the official Movember Australia Facebook page, the text rallies support for its campaign by drawing on Australian values. In doing so, it raises awareness of men's health issues and promotes positive changes in the ways that men approach their own health and wellbeing. Consider the analysis of language used to reflect the Australian values of humour and mateship.



1 Do you feel that tickle and twitch in your whiskers?
2 Yep that's right, it's 100 days till Mo - the countdown
3 is ON. Movember is calling on all legends, super
4 heroes, champs and Mo pioneers to make this
5 Movember bigger, better and hairier than ever.

6 Rally your mates and colleagues for the hairy season
7 and help change the face of men's health.

8 **#Movember #Movember2022**

Source: Movember Australia, https://fb.watch/mRD8zkLYZc/

The Movember Australia Facebook post contains playful language that embodies the Australian national value of mateship and the proclivity for humour. Acting as a determiner, the lexeme 'all' (line 3) has an inclusive purpose, modifying the list of nouns of 'legends, super heroes, champs and Mo pioneers' (lines 3–4). This indicates that the call to action to help men in Australia applies to a broad range of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences. The humour of the post lies in the figurative language, 'hairy season' (line 6). Likening the period during which men grow moustaches to a season, this metaphor conveys the idea that seasons are cyclical and recurring, just as the Movember event happens annually. The adjective 'hairy' adds a humourous and lighthearted tone to the metaphor, creating a sense of fun and playfulness around the idea of growing a moustache for charity. Furthermore, the use of the colloquialism 'mate' in the verb phrase 'rally your mates' (line 6) embodies the quintessential national value of mateship, through the idea of Australians coming together in solidarity to lend a hand to those in need.

Identifies that the language reflects Australian national identity.

Provides examples, using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses the function of the language feature.

Explains the meaning of the metaphor used in the post.

Identifies how the language connects to values tied to Australian national identity.

Elaborates on how the example is deeply rooted in Australian culture and represents the idea of unity and support.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of language used to reflect the Australian value of multiculturalism in the excerpt below from the short story ‘Perfect Chinese children’.

1 If there was ever anyone I wanted to stab in the heart with a chopstick, it was my cousin David.
2 ‘What happened to the four per cent?’ my mother says, looking at my maths exam.
3 ‘I got ninety-six. What else do you want?’
4 ‘Don’t talk back,’ my mother snaps. ‘Ninety-six isn’t 100. If you want to do well you have to
5 try harder. David just got 99.9 on his HSC.’
6 I dig my nails into my chair and wait for the punchline.
7 ‘He asked me to ring up the school board and contest the score. Ha! Imagine that. The lady on
8 the phone laughed.’
9 My mother shakes her head in wonder, as though David is the god of a new religion she’s
10 following.
11 ‘It really was 100,’ she says confidentially. ‘They had to scale it down for the school.’
12 Usually Chinese parents don’t have bragging rights over other people’s children, but my mother
13 tutored David through high school, so his HSC score is her crowning victory.
14 My maths exam, with the scrawled red ‘96’ that I was so proud of, begins to look ratty.

Source: Vanessa Woods, ‘Perfect Chinese children’, *Growing Up in Australia*, Black Inc., 30 Nov 2021

In this excerpt, author Vanessa Woods highlights multiculturalism in Australia by exploring her Chinese Australian identity. The use of the noun ‘chopstick’ (line 1) is a cultural reference to eating Chinese food and by extension, to Chinese culture. Additionally, Woods uses humour when describing the ‘chopstick’ being used as a weapon against her academically successful cousin David, to demonstrate that the emphasis on academic achievement and the pressure to do well in school is a common theme in Chinese culture. Through these instances, Woods establishes her Chinese identity for the reader. However, Woods also uses Australian-specific language to explore how Chinese culture is integrated in an Australian context. The initialism ‘HSC’ (Higher School Certificate) in line 5 is a specific reference to the New South Wales education system, and the use of ‘maths’ (line 2) instead of the Americanism ‘math’ gives a further contextual clue that Woods has grown up in Australia. By combining elements of Chinese culture with SAE vocabulary, Woods constructs images of Chinese culture in an Australian context, reinforcing her Chinese Australian identity and emphasising the multicultural nature of Australian society.

Identifies that the language reflects multiculturalism.

Using metalanguage, provides example of language that signals multicultural identity.

Points out a humorous element and explains its cultural significance.

Explains how the language reveals that multiculturalism is an aspect of Australian national identity.

Using metalanguage, provides examples of language that demonstrate Australian context influencing Woods’ identity.

Explains how Woods blends Chinese cultural elements with SAE vocabulary to create a multicultural narrative.

Tip

When analysing language in relation to national identity, begin by identifying the language features, such as word classes and phrase types, that are used to convey meaning. Then, examine how these features connect to a perceived aspect of national identity, such as equality and a 'fair go' for all.

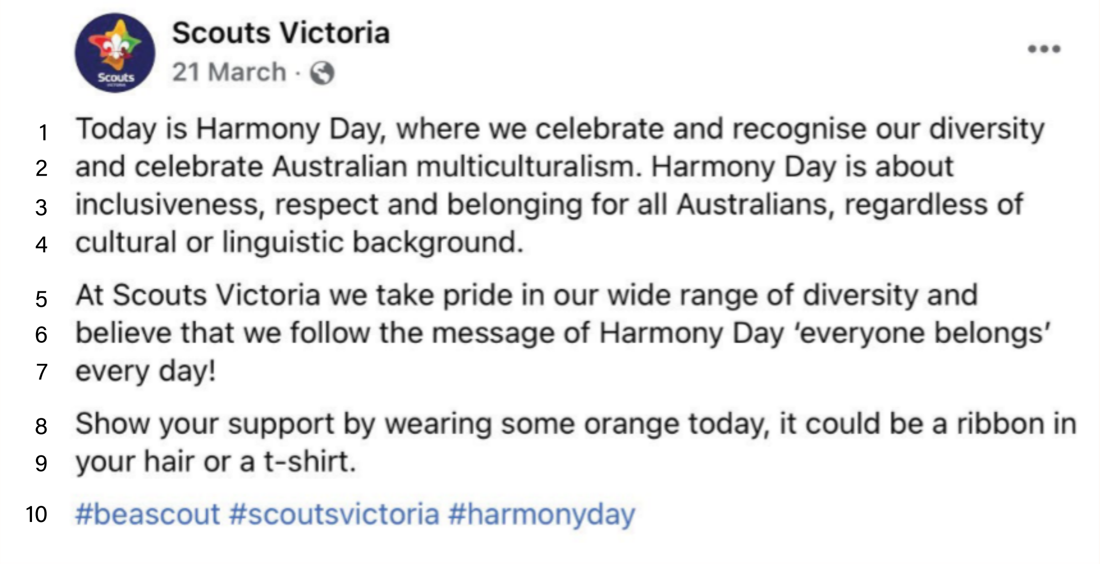
Develop your understanding 12.3

1 Explain how the language in the following political slogans conveys an aspect of national identity.

- **a** 'A strong voice for regional Australia' (National Party of Australia)
- **b** 'We've got the guts to say what you're thinking' (One Nation)
- **c** 'A future for all of us' (Australian Greens)

2 Write an analysis of the following Facebook post from Scouts Victoria regarding the language that promotes multiculturalism as an aspect of national identity. You could look at:

- the explicit mention of 'Harmony Day'
- nouns that come from a semantic domain around promoting diversity
- verbs that suggest that diversity and inclusiveness are valued and actively practised in the Scouts Victoria community
- functions of sentences that promote a sense of community and shared identity.



Scouts Victoria
21 March ·

Today is Harmony Day, where we celebrate and recognise our diversity and celebrate Australian multiculturalism. Harmony Day is about inclusiveness, respect and belonging for all Australians, regardless of cultural or linguistic background.

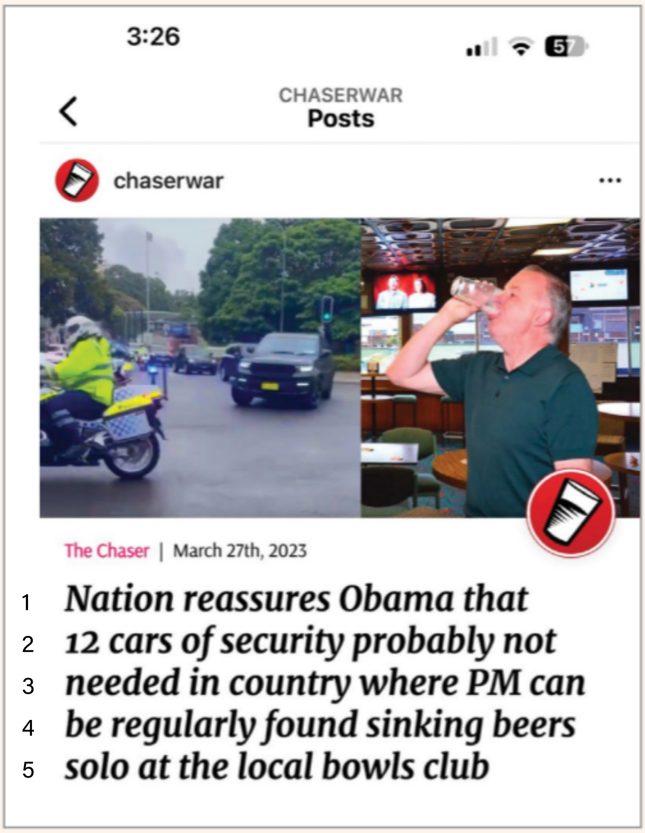
At Scouts Victoria we take pride in our wide range of diversity and believe that we follow the message of Harmony Day 'everyone belongs' every day!

Show your support by wearing some orange today, it could be a ribbon in your hair or a t-shirt.

#beascout #scoutsvictoria #harmonyday

Source: Scouts Victoria, https://www.facebook.com/scoutsvictoria/posts/pfbid026U99yFgkXmpax172LpaW5qqMc3ikCCeysQfiF6XX83Yi4K8i6apBtYN9YXcatYbkl

3 The Chaser is an Australian comedy group that uses satire to critique political and cultural events in Australia and around the world. The content on their Instagram page is often controversial and provocative as the group is known for humour that is edgy and, at times, offensive. The following Instagram post appeared during former US president Barack Obama's visit to Australia. Analyse the language that conveys The Chaser's larrikin identity. You should consider how the reference to Australia's prime minister aids in the post's irreverence.



The Chaser | March 27th, 2023

Nation reassures Obama that 12 cars of security probably not needed in country where PM can be regularly found sinking beers solo at the local bowls club

Source: The Chaser, https://www.instagram.com/p/CqSBtdTS47S/?igshid=MWZjMTM2ODFkZg==

Tip

Collect your own examples of language that conveys Australia's perceived national identity from sources such as social media, commercial advertising and other real-life contexts. Note how the language functions to promote the various aspects of national identity. These examples could be used as evidence for an essay topic that connects to Area of Study 1: Language variation in Australian society.

Global influences on English in Australian society

Much of Australia's unique linguistic development can be attributed to interactions with different countries and the impacts of global events. Linguistic variation and diversity has been particularly influenced by immigration, trade and cultural exchange, and this is particularly evident in the nation's variety of foods. The Australian vernacular includes food-related terms that are influenced by languages from all parts of the world. This is especially the case in Melbourne, which is renowned for its multicultural food. The city's vibrant and diverse population continues to attract people from all corners of the globe, resulting in a rich tapestry of cultures and culinary traditions. Some examples of Australian English lexemes borrowed from international cultures in the semantic domain of 'food' are listed in the following table.

Lexeme	Associated global cuisine	Meaning
Bao	Chinese	A term referring to a variety of filled bun or bread-like dumplings in various Chinese cuisines.
Sushi	Japanese	A dish made of vinegared rice with various ingredients, such as seafood and vegetables.
Banh mi	Vietnamese	A type of sandwich that includes ingredients such as pickled carrots, radish, coriander and a variety of meats.
Pho	Vietnamese	A soup consisting of meat (usually beef or chicken), rice noodles and herbs.
Laksa	Malaysian	A spicy noodle soup with vegetables and meat, seafood or tofu.
Pad thai	Thai	A stir-fried rice noodle dish containing vegetables and protein.
Tandoori	Indian	A dish of chicken, beef or vegetables marinated in yoghurt and spices and typically cooked in a tandoor, a type of clay oven.
Biryani	Urdu/Indian	A mixed rice dish made with Indian spices and meat, seafood or vegetables.
Kimchi	Korean	A side dish made from salted and fermented vegetables, especially cabbage.
Hummus	Lebanese	A dip made from ground chickpeas, tahini, garlic and lemon juice.
Jollof	West African	A one-pot rice dish typically consisting of a tomato-based sauce and a variety of meats and/or vegetables.

There are many other lexemes used in Australian English that originated from other languages, including karaoke (Japanese), giraffe (Arabic) and poltergeist (German).

Tip

Collect examples of lexemes that originate from other global cultures that are integrated into Australia English. You may like to look in restaurants, advertisements or in the public domain.

Global linguistic influences through technology and the internet

Modern technologies, such as digital platforms and the internet, have also greatly influenced English in Australia by facilitating linguistic innovation and the adoption of new communication styles.

The internet has fundamentally transformed the way people communicate, breaking down geographic barriers and enabling instantaneous communication across borders. Before the internet, communication was primarily limited by geographical constraints. Messages took time to travel from one place to another. However, since the advent of the internet, these barriers have been dismantled and the widespread exchange of ideas, knowledge and cultural practices has ensued.

The internet has accelerated the transformation of language, swiftly incorporating new expressions and terms into the Australian vernacular. The growth of internet slang has spawned myriad initialisms, acronyms and abbreviated words, as well as emoticons, emojis and context-specific graphemes. Some examples, such as 'lol' and 'omg', have been around since the early days of the internet and remain widely used today. However, in such a dynamic environment, new slang terms can emerge and spread rapidly, and just as quickly fall out of usage. These are often influenced by viral memes, popular culture or specific online communities.

Social media and instant messaging encourage brevity and informality, leading to a more casual and concise style in online communication. Unconventional spelling, punctuation and grammar can vividly capture the immediacy and ingenuity of spoken language in all its diversity. For instance, the use of abbreviations and emojis or the intentional misspelling of words can convey a range of emotions and nuances that mirror the richness of face-to-face conversations. Moreover, the internet's global reach allows these language forms to be shared and understood across different cultures and communities.

Examples

🐐	GOAT	Greatest Of All Time
☕	T	Referring to 'spilling the tea', meaning sharing gossip

Autocorrect and predictive text are common features in a multitude of digital devices, software applications and communication platforms. Usually, these features operate based on a default language or a set of languages determined by the device or application settings.

In the Australian context, the default American English settings of autocorrect and predictive text systems can lead to a subtle shift in how English is written and used. For instance, 'colour' might be automatically corrected to 'color' or 'centre' to 'center', reflecting American spelling conventions. Similarly, predictive text might suggest American terms or phrases over their Australian counterparts. Over time, these corrections and suggestions can influence users to adopt American English spelling and usage, potentially leading to a gradual erosion of distinct Australian English norms in digital communication. This is especially true for younger generations who are growing up in a digital age and are more likely to be influenced by the language norms they encounter in their digital interactions.

The impact of modern technologies on social and political movements

The rise of online global connectivity has had a profound impact on how political and social movements are shared, understood and responded to, worldwide. Australians, like many others globally, have been quick to respond to these movements, largely due to the immediacy and reach of social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok. Hashtag activism is a term used to describe the use of hashtags on social media platforms to support, draw attention to or mobilise around a cause or social issue. It's a form of digital activism that leverages the power of social media to spread information, raise awareness and inspire action.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is a prime example of this phenomenon. Originating in the United States in 2013, the BLM movement gained significant traction in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer. Despite the geographical distance, Australians were quick to respond to this movement. Protests were organised in major cities across the country, showing solidarity with the movement and drawing attention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody in Australia. This rapid response was largely facilitated by social media. Hashtags such as #BlackLivesMatter and #BLMAustralia trended on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, allowing Australians to engage with the movement, share information and organise protests.

As our world continues to become more interconnected, it's likely that social media will continue to play a crucial role in shaping social movement responses both in Australia and globally.

Worked example

Consider the following discussion on how English in Australian society is influenced by global political movements such as the BLM movement.

The Black Lives Matter movement resonated worldwide, prompting a heightened examination of racial and cultural sensitivities in many areas, including the area of product branding. This led numerous Australian companies to reassess and modify their branding. In June 2020, Allen's Lollies, a Nestlé subsidiary, announced plans to rename its 'Red Skins' and 'Chicos' products to 'Red Ripperz' and 'Cheekies', respectively. The decision was driven by the racially derogatory implications of these names. 'Red Skins' is a term offensive to Native Americans, while 'Chicos', Spanish for 'children', can be seen as disrespectful to those of Latin American descent. Similarly, Saputo Dairy Australia, the producer of 'Coon' cheese, faced criticism due to the racial slur associated with the name. In response to the public outcry and the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, the company announced in July 2020 that it would rebrand the cheese as 'Cheer' in July 2021. These changes highlight Australia's deep connection with global trends and movements. It is clear that social movements, even when they originate in a different country, can have a profound impact on language decisions made elsewhere, thanks to the global interconnectedness facilitated by the internet and social media.

Establishes a cause-and-effect relationship, showing how the global movement led to changes in Australian companies' branding strategies.

Provides specific examples of Australian responses to the movement.

Explains the reasoning behind the responses.

Draws a conclusion from the provided examples, emphasising Australia's engagement with global trends.

Highlights the influence of global social movements on decisions in other countries, facilitated by digital connectivity.

Develop your understanding 12.4

Explore the most recent hashtag trends on social media.

1 Compile a list of topics that are evidence of Australia's global connectivity.

2 Examine whether any of the topics you have listed have examples of hashtag activism.

3 Consider whether the hashtag trend has resulted in any changes or modifications to language used in Australia.

CHAPTER

13

Australian Englishes and variation by culture

In this chapter, we examine different Australian Englishes that vary according to culture and ethnocultural heritage. These differentiations exist and flourish in their speech communities across the nation. We also explore attitudes towards Australian English varieties and how they influence language use.

Key knowledge covered:

- how English varies according to culture, including Standard Australian English, Aboriginal Australian Englishes and migrant ethnolects
- attitudes within Australian society to different varieties of English, including prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAEs)	Aboriginal Australian Englishes is an umbrella term used to refer to the many different varieties of English that many First Nations people speak.
Migrant ethnolect	A variety of language specific to a particular migrant community with a shared cultural background.

English and variation by culture

There are three main Australian Englishes studied in Year 12 English Language: Standard Australian English (SAE), Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAEs) and migrant ethnolects.

Standard Australian English

As we learned in Chapter 12, SAE is the prestige variety of Australian English. It is commonly used in formal settings such as government, education and the law, and has particular features that differentiate it from Englishes spoken in other countries around the world. When considering the language varieties used in Australia today, it is important to consider SAE alongside AAEs and migrant ethnolects, particularly in terms of how they differ.

Migrant ethnolects and Aboriginal Australian Englishes

Migrant ethnolects and AAEs are Australian English varieties that are specific to communities based on ethnocultural heritage. The language used in these Australian Englishes is important in reflecting group and individual identity. These language varieties can:

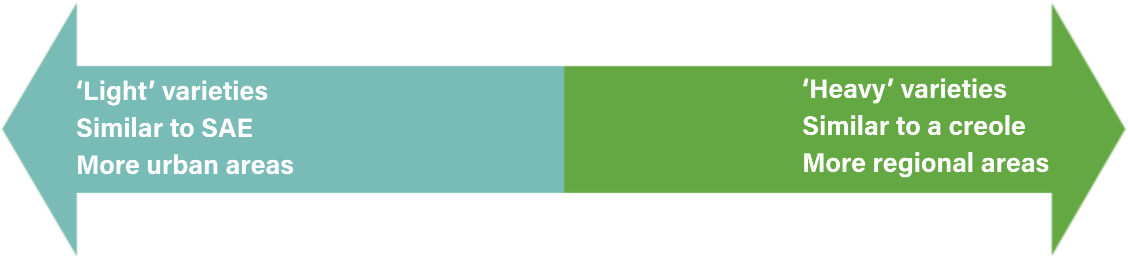
- allow speakers to **maintain and express cultural identity** by reflecting speakers' heritage and backgrounds
- **facilitate communication** among individuals from the same cultural background, especially in informal contexts
- **foster a sense of community** among speakers, helping individuals feel a sense of belonging and connection with others who share the same or similar cultural background
- **promote bilingualism and multilingualism** among speakers, as they often involve elements of two or more languages
- **contribute to the diversity and evolution of a language**, introducing new words, phrases or ways of speaking into the broader language community
- **facilitate cultural exchange**, as they often involve blending elements of different languages and cultures, leading to greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures
- help **preserve and maintain heritage languages**
- **contribute to the linguistic richness** of Australia, showcasing the diversity of its people and their cultural backgrounds.

Aboriginal Australian Englishes

AAEs emerged as a result of colonisation and subsequent interactions between First Nations people and English speakers in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. Forced assimilation, displacement from Country and ongoing violence affected all aspects of First Nations cultures, and led to significant reductions in the number of speakers of the many diverse First Nations languages.

This history also led to the development of unique varieties of English, which incorporated elements of First Nations languages as well as English dialects brought by colonisers. Over time, AAEs evolved as distinct, complex varieties of English, with their own sets of grammar rules, vocabularies and pronunciations. AAEs are estimated to be spoken by eighty per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and many Aboriginal children speak an AAE as their first language (Collard and Rodriguez Louro 2020).

Varieties of AAE form a continuum, ranging from being similar to SAE, referred to as the 'light varieties', to being closer to Australian First Nations creole languages such as Kriol (an English-based creole spoken by many First Nations people who live in northern and central Australia), known as the 'heavy varieties'. The heavy AAE varieties are primarily spoken in remote regions. In contrast, the lighter varieties of AAE are spoken in more built-up areas such as towns, cities and metropolises (Eades 2012).



Features of Aboriginal Australian Englishes

When discussing the characteristics of AAEs, it's important to remember that there are many different varieties of AAE. This section will discuss some common or prevalent features of AAEs; however, remember that this is not all-encompassing and there will be differences between individual AAE varieties.

Phonetics and phonology

AAEs are characterised by unique pronunciations that differentiate them from SAE. In many AAEs, it is typical to replace the voiced 'th' phoneme /ð/ with a voiced /d/, which results in words such as 'this' and 'that' being pronounced as 'dis' and 'dat'. It is also typical for the 'h' sound to be added to words that start with a vowel. For example, it has been noted in some studies of AAEs that 'Uncle Henry' is pronounced as 'Huncle Henry' (Eades 2012). Another common feature in AAEs is for speakers to switch the 'k' and 's' sounds in the word 'ask' so that it is pronounced as 'aks'. This process is called metathesis and 'aks' is found in many other varieties of English.

In some instances, consonant sounds undergo the simplification processes of elision or assimilation.

Morphology

Morphological features in AAEs include omitting plural noun marking, for instance saying 'two dog' instead of 'two dogs'. Inflections indicating verb tense may also follow different grammatical conventions (e.g. 'he get the food' instead of 'he got the food').

Lexicology

AAEs include words that aren't used in SAE, with many words borrowed from First Nations languages. There is considerable regional variation in the lexicon of AAEs. For example, the word for 'policeman' is 'monatj' in Western Australia, 'booliman' in Queensland, and 'gunji' or 'gunjibal' in New South Wales (Eades 2012).

Syntax

Some of the syntactic features of AAEs are shown in the table below.

Feature	Examples
Auxiliary verbs omitted	'she wicked big', meaning 'she is wicked big' 'What you doing?', meaning 'What are you doing?'
Reduced use of prepositions	'Darwin way', meaning 'going to Darwin'
'Bin' used as a tense marker	'he bin come home', meaning 'he came home'
'One' used as substitute indefinite article	'she has one bag', meaning 'she has a bag'
Use of double negative	'I don't know nothing', meaning 'I don't know anything'

Semantics

Some English words might sound familiar to SAE speakers, but have different meanings when used in AAEs. In AAEs, the word 'deadly' means 'fantastic' or 'great', and 'shame' or 'shamejob' can mean 'how embarrassing' or refer to a public loss of status around one's peers. Also, 'Sorry Business' is a phrase in AAEs used to describe the ceremonial and mourning responsibilities of the family, extended kin and wider community when a family member dies.

One prominent way in which differences between AAEs and SAE occur is through the use of kinship terms. Some of these are outlined in the table below.

Term	Explanation
Aunty **Uncle**	Often used to refer to Elders and respected members of the community, regardless of their actual biological relationship to the speaker.
Cousin **Cuz**	Often used to refer to extended family members or close family friends.
Sister **Brother**	Can be used to refer to biological siblings or cousins, or members of the same social group or community.
Grandmother **Grannie** **Grandfather**	May be used to refer to great grandparents as well as grandparents.
Mob	Often used to describe family or kinship groups, but can also be used generally for a group of people.

Additional lexemes, or lexemes with different meanings, can also express particular values that are culturally significant. ‘Elder’ is a respectful term in AAEs to refer to First Nations people with important leadership and cultural roles in a First Nations community, and extended family kinship terms do not necessarily denote a genetic relation, but rather the social relation and the included responsibilities. Also, ‘Blak’, spelled without the ‘c’, is a term used by First Nations people to reclaim and celebrate cultural identity.

‘Country’ in AAEs is a particularly culturally significant term, and is capitalised to indicate its importance for First Nations’ communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see the ownership of the land as two-way; they own the land as much as the land owns them. The different and reciprocal relationship that First Nations people have with Country is in stark opposition to how non-Indigenous people interact with the land. Connection to Country is a fundamental part of identity and belonging for many First Nations people.

Discourse and pragmatics

While AAEs are used in written communication, they are primarily oral varieties shaped by the cultural and linguistic traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. AAEs have a strong oral storytelling tradition, with **yarning** being a key feature of communication. Yarning refers to a type of conversational approach in which speakers share real-life experiences and knowledge through different situational contexts, ranging from informal family gatherings to more formal public speeches. Yarning involves using paralinguistic features such as facial expressions and body language, and prosodic features such as pitch and intonation, to convey experiences and knowledge.

In the spoken discourse of AAEs, a discourse particle such as ‘ey’ can be used at the end of an utterance. This functions to confirm information or understanding (e.g. ‘They my Mob, ey?’). There is some regional variation of this discourse particle: in South Australia, ‘inna’ is used; whereas in parts of south-western Australia, ‘unna’ is more frequently used. AAE speakers also tend to use indirect questioning to obtain information. For example, they may use a declarative like ‘Dat your uncle/’ to mean the interrogative ‘Is that your uncle?’ By using this structure, the speaker is actually asking a question, as the rising pitch signals that they are seeking confirmation of the declarative statement of fact.

AAEs can be differentiated from SAE based on pragmatic use. While direct eye contact is commonly used and expected in SAE, some varieties of AAE may interpret it as impolite or as a face-threatening act. In SAE communication, silence may be interpreted as a breakdown in communication, but in AAEs silence holds significance in many interactions. It can be used to convey various meanings, such as respect, attentiveness and thoughtfulness.

The influence of Aboriginal Australian Englishes on Standard Australian English

AAEs and the First Nations languages that influence and inform them have had a significant impact on developing the vocabulary of SAE. One of the notable contributions of First Nations languages lies in the incorporation of names of plants and animals into SAE, such as ‘waratah’ from the Dharug language of the Sydney region; ‘coolabah’ from the Yuwaalayaay language of north-west New South Wales; and ‘kangaroo’ from the Guugu Yimidhirr language of the Cooktown region in Queensland. As noted earlier, ‘deadly’, used as an adjective to describe something that is ‘excellent’ or ‘formidable’, is being adopted more frequently into the SAE vernacular. Another example is the word ‘yakka’, which comes from the word ‘yaga’ in the Yagara language, meaning work.

The use of traditional place names is also now seen more frequently, especially across a range of mainstream media. Channel 10’s *The Project*, a news and current affairs program, begins each episode with some iteration of: ‘Welcome to the Project, we’re coming to you from the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation’. In doing so, the program pays respect to the five major Aboriginal language groups that comprise the Kulin Nations: the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung and Wathaurung. There has been a significant increase in ‘Acknowledgement of Country’, a formal statement that recognises and pays respect to the Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Owners and Custodians of the land on which an event or gathering is taking place. In an Acknowledgement of Country, it is commonplace to use the traditional name of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the area before recognising them as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the event is taking place. In this way, traditional nation and group names are used as a sign of respect and signal openness to recognising the importance as part of a connection to Country. This acknowledgement also operates to recognise First Nations Peoples’ land rights and ongoing sovereignty. In comparison, a Welcome to Country can only be performed by a Traditional Owner and signals that people are being welcomed onto the land of the Traditional Custodians.

Tip

Collect examples of AAEs usage from a range of contexts such as television, social media and music. Annotate these examples for features of AAEs. You will be able to draw on these examples for your essays and assessments on AAEs.

Worked example

Scan the code or click here to watch an educational campaign by the Heart Foundation, published in November 2020. The campaign adopts yarning to inform and educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the importance of getting heart checks.

Consider the following analysis of AAE in the video.

Published by the Heart Foundation, the educational video entitled ‘Get a heart check’ adopts yarning as a means of informing and educating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the importance of heart health. In this animated video, a character, presumably an Elder, explains to members of the community why it is important that they get heart checks. A discourse particle is employed on ‘I’ve been tryin’ to catch up to youse, ey?’ with the intention of confirming that the Elder is addressing the group of people that represent his community. The ‘d’ phoneme is used as a substitute for the voiced ‘th’ phoneme /ð/ in the word ‘dere’ as the Elder asks for the members of the community to ‘wait dere’ so he can begin to explain the need for medical heart health checks. As represented in the speech of the Elder in this video, this substitution is typical for AAEs.

Kinship terms are a regular feature in this video. In one instance, the Elder explains how ‘all our Mob everywhere’ needs to get checked. ‘Mob’ on this occasion is presumably used to signal denotation of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whereas the use of the noun phrase ‘family mob’ later on in the video is used to mean a close family or kinship group. Use of the lexeme ‘cruel’ in ‘I was cruel frightened too’ highlights how some English words have a different meaning when used in AAEs. Here ‘cruel’ operates as an adverb to signal that the Elder was ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ frightened when he initially went to the doctors.

The yarning style adopted in this video highlights the importance of informal conversation and the sharing of personal experiences in building and maintaining strong social connections within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Rather than relying solely on formal teaching methods, the importance of oral transmission and experiential learning is observed as the Elder describes his account of getting a heart check and explains why such checks are important to one’s overall health. The Heart Foundation video allows for the exchange of information and the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom from Elders and peers. The value of yarning is depicted in the ways the members of the community in the video are shown to be respectfully and quietly listening to the Elder talk about the importance of getting a heart check.

Identifies those who are represented in the animation.

Provides examples in quote form.

Explains the functions of the features.

Points to the features.

Discusses the value and importance of ‘yarning’.

Develop your understanding 13.1

1 In November 2022, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care released an advertising campaign directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that aimed to increase COVID-19 vaccination booster rates. Scan the code or click here to watch the video, then write a short paragraph about the function of AAEs lexemes in the advertisement.

2 Scan the code or click here to watch another Heart Foundation video, 'Know the signs of a heart attack'.

This video also adopts AAEs and yarning to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on heart health; specifically, the signs of heart attack and the steps to follow if a heart attack is suspected. Identify and analyse examples of AAEs that differ from SAE, such as:

- kinship terms
- English words that have different meanings when used in AAEs
- discourse particles used at the end of utterances
- grammatical features
- pronunciations.

In your analysis, point to each of the features listed above, provide an example in quote form and explain the functional use of the feature. You should consider the context of the text, and how this affects language use. As you conclude your analysis, consider the importance and value of 'yarning' in this video as a means to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Migrant ethnolects

Australia has a culturally diverse population, with nearly one third of the resident population born overseas (ABS 2021). This diversity is a result of Australia's history as a migrant destination, with people coming from various parts of the world. The presence of such a large migrant population has led to the emergence of migrant ethnolects in Australia.

An ethnolect is a linguistic variation specific to a particular ethnic community. Ethnolects emerge when the English spoken by immigrants and their children is influenced by their home language. Greek Australian, Italian Australian, Lebanese Australian and Vietnamese Australian English ethnolects are particularly noteworthy, each evolving from different waves of migration to the country.

A pioneering study of the Greek Australian ethnolect in 2001 examined the speech of Year 10 students from ten schools in Melbourne and found that the students' ethnolects were strongest when interacting with family, and less pronounced when they were interviewed by researchers (Clyne, Eisikovits and Tollfree 2001). This study demonstrated that ethnolects hold great importance as they enable individuals to express their linguistic identity and their belonging to their ethnic community. Thus, migrant ethnolects can be used to establish covert prestige (the value given to language that is not necessarily prestigious in a wide social context).

→ See page 210 to learn about covert prestige.

There are many language features to consider when examining the various ethnolects in Australia, including those in the following table.

Subsystem	Feature
Phonetics and phonology	assimilation vowel reduction or insertion elision prosody
Morphology	inflectional patterns (conjugation, pluralisation) affixation
Lexicology	borrowing code switching
Syntax	modification of word order ellipsis, particularly of prepositions and determiners
Semantics	culture-specific expressions, such as idiomatic expressions metaphors with specific cultural meaning
Discourse and pragmatics	expected levels of formality politeness strategies types of discourse markers

The following sections provide a brief outline of Greek and Lebanese Australian ethnolects and show some of the language features of both. You are not required to memorise every single feature of these ethnolects; rather, these are example explorations of how you might describe features of an ethnolect.

You are encouraged to research the language features and collect language examples of any ethnolects that interest you during the year. You can consider examples from mainstream and social media, as well as your own experiences with friends and family.

The Greek Australian ethnolect

The Greek Australian ethnolect began to emerge most notably after WWII, when a large influx of Greek migrants arrived in Australia. Several distinct features are associated with this language variety.

In the Greek Australian ethnolect, pronunciation is generally non-rhotic – as with SAE – where ‘r’ is not pronounced at the end of words. There is also a tendency to pronounce the /ia/ (‘ee-ah’) sound at the end of words like ‘year’ and ‘here’ within the Greek Australian ethnolect. The /θ/ (thing) and /ð/ (this) phonemes are often pronounced as ‘t’ and ‘d’, respectively, due to the influence of Modern Greek which lacks a voiced and voiceless ‘th’. Consequently, ‘this’ might be pronounced as ‘dis’, and ‘thing’ as ‘ting’.

Greek Australian ethnolects, like other ethnolects, also contain lexical borrowings. *Yiayia* is one such example drawn from Greek which is a kinship term for grandmother. In addition, the conversational Greek term *re* is an informal term of address similar to the SAE term, 'mate'. This lexeme allows the speaker to express familiarity, but can also have a variety of other meanings. It can be used to call for someone's attention (e.g. '*Re*, have you seen this?'), to emphasise a point ('That was a great movie, *re*'), or even to communicate surprise or disbelief (e.g. '*Re*, you're not serious!').

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following conversation.

1 Stelios: *Ade*[1] (.) go get the *skoupa*[2] (.) *re*[3]\
2 Kristos: Is it under the *skala*[4]?
3 Stelios: No/
4 It's in the *garazi*[5] Kristaki[6]\
5 <A *ade ade* A> mum and dad are coming soon\

[1] ***ade:*** an informal Greek term meaning 'hurry up'

[2] ***skoupa:*** a Greek Australian ethnolect term meaning 'broom'

[3] ***re:*** a Greek informal term of address

[4] ***skala:*** a Greek Australian ethnolect term meaning 'stairs'

[5] ***garazi:*** a Greek Australian ethnolect term meaning 'garage'

[6] **Kristaki:** pet name for Kristos (hypocoristic use of suffix '-aki')

The conversation between Stelios and Kristos provides evidence of a Greek Australian ethnolect. Most notably, both Stelios and Kristos code-switch as they employ Greek-derived words, such as '*skoupa*' (line 1) for broom and '*skala*' (line 2) for stairs. This act of code switching not only serves as a direct reference to their Greek heritage but also mirrors the shared lexicon of many in the Greek Australian community. Stelios' use of the term '*re*' (line 1) functions as an informal Greek interjection. Through this, he urges Kristos to act and provides evidence of a linguistic feature that members of the Greek Australian community would recognise and resonate with. The urgency in Stelios' voice, demonstrated by the repetitive '*ade ade*' (line 5), might hint at Greek conversational norms, where repetition signifies emphasis. Stelios and Kristos' conversation reveals a shared cultural bond. Their ability to effortless use Australian Greek ethnolect terms displays a shared understanding and points to a deeply rooted cultural identity. By retaining and employing Greek terms, Stelios and Kristos are preserving their linguistic heritage while navigating and embracing the broader Australian linguistic landscape.

Opens by stating the ethnolect being discussed.

Identifies language features of the Greek Australian ethnolect using appropriate metalanguage.

Provides concrete examples from the conversation.

Explains how the language features function in the conversation to create meaning and reflect identity.

Discusses the cultural significance of the ethnolect in signalling and strengthening identity.

The Lebanese Australian ethnolect

The Lebanese Australian English ethnolect is another well-documented and recognisable ethnolect, predominantly concentrated in areas with large populations of Lebanese migrants such as Melbourne and Sydney and their surrounding suburbs.

Studies carried out by Felicity Cox and Sallyanne Palethorpe (2011) found that speakers with Lebanese backgrounds held certain parts of words for different durations, resulting in variations in the timing of syllables compared to the speech of Australians with Anglo-Celtic heritage. For example, Lebanese Australian English ethnolect speakers pronounce vowel sounds for a longer duration in words that end with voiceless consonant sounds (e.g. 'hat'). Other unique characteristics in the Lebanese Australian English ethnolect include higher pitch and unconventional contractions, whereby the merging or alteration of the words 'do not' into 'don't' is expressed as 'doon't'. This unconventional contraction reflects a distinct pronunciation pattern influenced by Lebanese Arabic, where the 'oo' sound replaces the 'o' sound commonly used in Australian English.

Another difference is the pronunciation of words ending in 'er', called 'word final -er'. In Lebanese Australian English ethnolects, the pronunciation of word final -er becomes longer in duration compared to a more general Australian English variety. Additionally, it is pronounced at a lower pitch and with a more back articulation position in the mouth.

A further key feature of the Lebanese Australian ethnolect is the borrowing of words spoken in Lebanese into English speech. Words such as *habib* (meaning 'darling' or 'beloved' in Arabic) and *yallah* (used to express 'let's go' or 'come on' in Arabic) may be used when speaking English. This serves as a significant marker of both cultural identity and cultural affiliation to the Lebanese heritage of the speaker, fostering a sense of solidarity and belonging among speakers of the ethnolect. As such, the linguistic features of the Lebanese Australian ethnolect represent a conscious effort to maintain and preserve Lebanese cultural identity in the context of Australian English communication.

Tip

Visit the *Ethnocultural variation* webpage on the Macquarie University website to listen to examples of ethnolects. Scan the code or click here to view the webpage.

Develop your understanding 13.2

1. Conduct some research into a chosen Australian migrant ethnolect. This could be Italian Australian English, Greek Australian English, Chinese Australian English, Vietnamese Australian English, Lebanese Australian English or any other ethnolect you are interested in. Focus on its unique linguistic features, its history and the community that uses it.
   - a Find an example that illustrates the use of your chosen ethnolect. This could be a transcript of a conversation, a video clip, a written text or any other example that showcases the ethnolect in use.
   - b Prepare a short presentation based on your research to present to your class. Include in your presentation the importance and value of the ethnolect in the expression of cultural identity and affiliation.
2. Write a paragraph that reflects on how migrant ethnolects contribute to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Australia. Include examples of Australian ethnolects in your discussion.

Attitudes to varieties of English in Australia

Attitudes to language varieties are inherently intertwined with societal perceptions, often mirroring a community's views on social status, cultural identity and norms. In Australia, as we've discussed, SAE is frequently perceived as a prestigious language variety, which stems from its widespread use by individuals in positions of power, authority and influence. It has cultivated an association with education and elevated social status.

Attitudes to language provide a window into how society perceives, and interacts with, different varieties and their speakers. This is particularly evident in Australia, a country marked by linguistic diversity. The societal perceptions and attitudes towards language varieties have significant implications – they reflect and reinforce the community's views on social status, cultural identity and norms, shaping how different varieties and their speakers are perceived and treated.

In the field of linguistics, **prescriptivism** and **descriptivism** represent two contrasting approaches to understanding and analysing language.

Prescriptivist attitudes

Prescriptivism is the belief that there are correct and incorrect ways to use language. Prescriptivists establish rules and standards for language use, often based on traditional norms. They tend to view language through the lens of how it 'should' be used and often aim to maintain the 'purity' of a language by preventing changes that they perceive as degradation or corruption.

Prescriptivist attitudes to SAE often uphold it as the ‘correct’ form of English, while stigmatising other varieties as inferior or incorrect.

AAEs, due to their differences from SAE, are often mistakenly perceived as ‘broken’ English by prescriptivists. This viewpoint likely stems from a lack of understanding and recognition of the unique and intricate nature of AAEs, which encompass their own sets of grammars, vocabularies and pronunciation rules.

Through a prescriptivist lens, migrant ethnolects are frequently seen as ‘corrupted’ versions of English, requiring correction to return to something closer to SAE. This perspective often overlooks the significance of ethnolects as indicators of cultural identity, and their role in fostering solidarity among their users and maintaining traditions.

Descriptivist attitudes

Descriptivism focuses on language as it is actually used in real-world contexts. Descriptivists aim to describe language objectively, without making judgements about what is correct or incorrect. They study the variations and changes in language over time and across different social groups, viewing all forms of language as valid in their own contexts. Thus, descriptivists see change and diversity as natural and inevitable parts of language evolution. They view SAE as just one of many valid varieties of English used in Australia, with its own unique set of linguistic features and social meanings.

Through a descriptivist perspective, AAEs are recognised as distinct and legitimate varieties of English, reflecting the unique cultural and historical experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This approach in the field of linguistics seeks to document the varieties and support their usage within communities, celebrating them as markers of group identity. Further, descriptivists see an understanding of these varieties as an essential tool to foster connection and facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

Migrant ethnolects are viewed by descriptivists as similarly acting as markers of group identity. Descriptivist attitudes appreciate these ethnolects as valuable linguistic phenomena, emblematic of Australia’s multicultural fabric and the dynamic, ever-changing landscape of language within the country.

Develop your understanding 13.3

Consider both prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes that are commonly attached to SAE, AAEs and migrant ethnolects. Write three paragraphs that examine the implications of such attitudes.

CHAPTER
14

Analysing Australian Englishes

During your study of English Language, you can be assessed through any one or a combination of the following tasks: a folio of annotated texts, an essay, an investigative report, an analytical commentary and short-answer questions. This chapter includes one spoken text and provides practice for each task, with a focus on Unit 4, Area of Study 1: Language variation in Australian society.

Refer to Chapter 18 on pages 219–43 to learn how to approach each of these tasks.

Essay topics

Write an essay that responds to one of the essay questions. Refer to the stimulus material provided.

Question 1

Stimulus A

'Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity. It is the means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be conveyed and preserved.'

Australian Government, NSW Department of Education, 'The importance of culture, language and identity', RacismNoWay, <https://racismnoway.com.au>, 2000

Stimulus B

'The cultural DNA of this country is in the sound of the way Australians speak.'

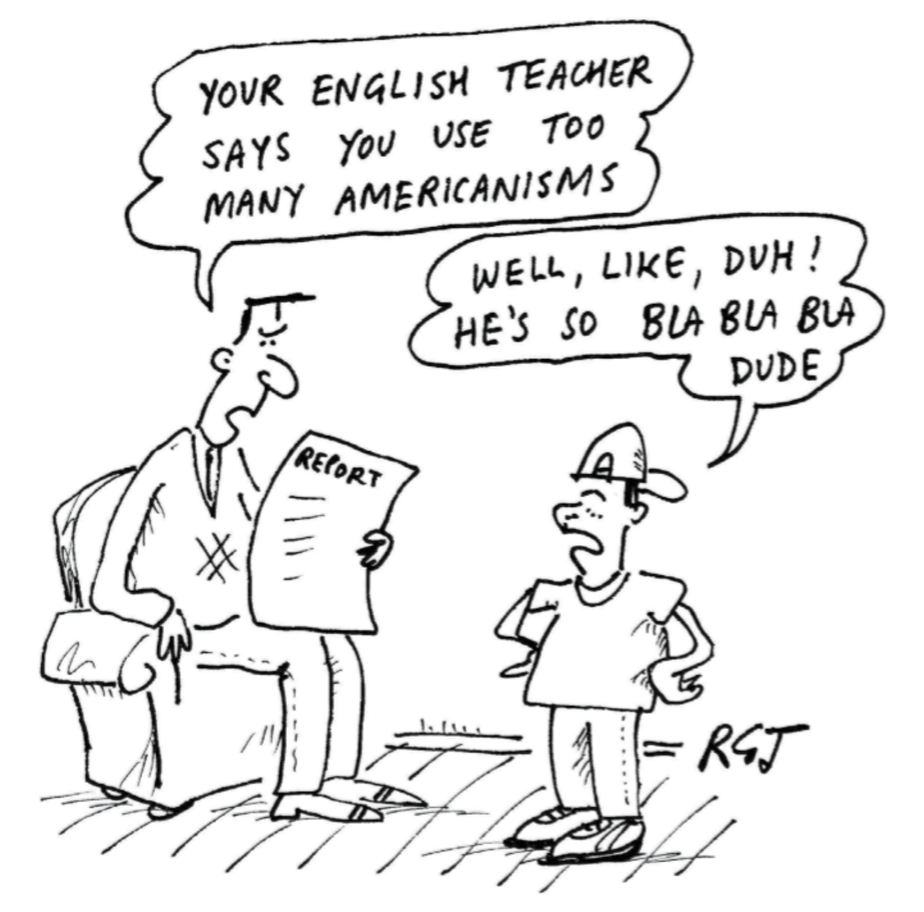
Quote from John Clarke in the documentary *The sounds of Aus: The story of the Aussie accent*, directed by David Swann, ABC, 2007

Stimulus C

'There is a widely shared perception that swearing plays a particularly important role in Australian English, more so than in other Englishes.'

Anna Wierzbicka, 'Australian cultural scripts—*bloody* revisited', *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 34, no. 9, <https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(01)00023-6>, 2002, p. 1178

Stimulus D


YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER SAYS YOU USE TOO MANY AMERICANISMS
WELL, LIKE, DUH! HE'S SO BLA BLA BLA DUDE
REPORT
RGJ

Cartoon by Richard Jolley, Cartoonstock, <cartoonstock.com>, 14 November 2006

‘You can identify an Australian by what they say and how they say it.’

Discuss when this is true in contemporary Australia. Refer to at least two subsystems in your response.

Question 2

Stimulus A

‘Standard languages represent a kind of linguistic “best practice” – a set of behaviours that claims to excel all others.’

Kate Burridge, ‘Proper English: Rhetoric or reality’, *English Australia Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.489199844018648>, 2004, p. 9

Stimulus B

‘If we place too much prestige on Standard Australian English, we risk devaluing other varieties.’

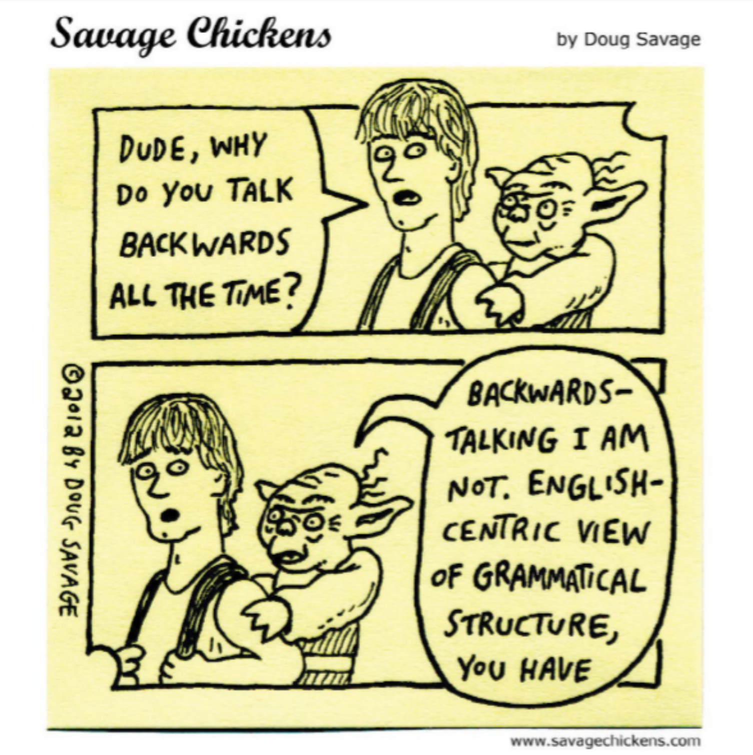
Student in an English Language classroom

Stimulus C

‘… the ethnolect is not simply the result of “interference” from L1[1] but either a symbol of group identity in the wider community or, more usually, a vehicle for expressing multiple identity.’

Michael Clyne, Edina Eisikovits and Laura Tollfree, ‘Ethnolects as in-group varieties,’ in Anna Duszak (ed.), *Us and others: Social identities across languages, discourses and cultures*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 2002, p. 133, https://www.benjamins.com/catalog/pbns.98

Stimulus D


Savage Chickens
by Doug Savage
DUDE, WHY DO YOU TALK BACKWARDS ALL THE TIME?
BACKWARDS-TALKING I AM NOT. ENGLISH-CENTRIC VIEW OF GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE, YOU HAVE
©2012 BY DOUG SAVAGE
www.savagechickens.com

Cartoon by Doug Savage, Savage Chickens, < https://www.savagechickens.com>, 5 July 2012

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[1] **L1** – first language

‘All varieties of Australian English are important symbols of community, so they belong in the public domain.’

Do you agree? Refer to at least two subsystems of language in your response.

Investigative report

Conduct research into an Australian migrant ethnolect and its influencing language and culture. Interview an individual who speaks the ethnolect about their experiences relating to the language variety and its associated culture, and inquire into the attitudes towards the ethnolect that they have come into contact with.

Construct a written report or equivalent presentation outlining the key features of the ethnolect. Include examples from a range of subsystems, and examine the attitudes towards it that you found. Include an introduction, methodology, findings, analysis and conclusion.

Annotating texts

Annotate the language features of the text on page 182, considering how they relate to an Australian identity.

Short-answer questions

Refer to the text on page 182 and answer the following questions.

1 Identify two examples of Australian vocabulary, using appropriate metalanguage. (2 marks)

2 Identify the register of the text and explain how it aligns with the Australian value of egalitarianism. (3 marks)

3 How are the prosodic features employed by the characters supporting a function of the advertisement? Refer to at least two examples, using line numbers and appropriate metalanguage. (3 marks)

4 Discuss how Australian identity is expressed through the use of profanity in this advertisement. Refer to two examples and use line numbers in your response. (4 marks)

Analytical commentary

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of the text on page 182. Use appropriate metalanguage and include line numbers in your response.

In your response, consider:

- the role of Standard Australian English
- the register of the text and its connection to Australian identity
- the function of the text and how this is achieved using SAE features
- how the situational and cultural contexts have informed the language features present.

Scan the code or click here to view answers to the short-answer questions and the analytical commentary.

Spoken text

The insurance agency HBF has been using animated versions of native Australian quokkas as a part of their advertising since 2020, drawing on the fact that both HBF and the quokkas are from Western Australia. In 2021, Nova's WA radio team Nathan, Nat and Shaun requested that the quokkas be used to advertise something else hailing from WA: the Kalgoorlie Sausage Roll.

HBF made an advertisement with the animated quokkas for Kalgoorlie Sausage Rolls in response to the radio team's request. It featured four animated quokkas: Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4. Scan the code or click here to watch the advertisement.

See page 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

1	Q1:	Best thing from WA (.) go/
2	Q2:	De=r us\
3	Q1:	Besides us\
4	Q3:	<F Kalgoorlie Sausage Ro=ll. F>
5	Q2:	O=h yea=h/
6		With lots of sauce/
7	Q3:	Without sauce.
8	Q2:	With sauce.
9	Q1:	H=uh what a quokka sh-
10	Q4:	*blows whistle*
11	Q1:	We all know the Kalgoorlie Sausage Roll is awesome.
12	Q3:	I wish I had one right now\
13	Q1:	Why don't you hit up Nathan Nat and Shaun?
14		They're obsessed with the bloody thing/
15	Q3:	aw= Kalgoorlie Sausage Roll/
16	Q1:	Mm=
17		The Kalgoorlie Sausage Roll.
18		Doing the best by WA since (..) <L I don't know ages ago L>

Source: HBF, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn6-G1JHk-s

UNIT
4

Language variation and identity

Area of Study 2: Individual and group identities

In Unit 4, Area of Study 2, we explore how different dialects, in particular sociolects and idiolects, help to present our personal and group identities.

The English Language Study Design outlines the following key knowledge points:*

- social and personal variation (sociolects and idiolects) in language according to factors such as age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspirations and education
- representations of individual and group identities in a range of texts
- the ways in which the language of individuals and the language of groups is shaped by social expectations and community attitudes
- the ways in which people draw on their linguistic repertoire to gain power and prestige, including exploiting overt and covert norms
- code switching as a means of demonstrating group membership and belonging
- the relationship between social attitudes and language choices
- metalanguage to discuss representations of identity in texts.

The key knowledge points 'representations of individual and group identities in a range of texts' and 'metalanguage to discuss representations of identity in texts' are covered throughout the chapters for this area of study. Chapter 15 explores how language variation can construct identities, including our individual identities deriving from our unique traits, and our social identities stemming from group affiliations. Chapter 16 further examines social influences on language choice, considering the influence of overt and covert prestige in speech communities.

This area of study requires you to identify, describe and analyse how users vary their language and use their language choices and linguistic repertoires to demonstrate and reflect personal identity, group membership and social belonging. Chapter 17 provides practice for each major assessment type you may face, with a focus on language variation based on individual and group identities.

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* Key knowledge points are © VCAA, reproduced by permission.

CHAPTER 15

Sociolects, idiolects and attitudes

In this chapter we consider how individual variation in language use can help to represent who we are as people, revealing both traits that we wish to display and traits that we are not necessarily aware of demonstrating. We look at language's role in shaping and communicating individual and group identities within speech communities. We also examine the ways in which social expectations and community attitudes impact language use, and the ways in which shared expectations promote and challenge group membership, belonging and the creation and maintenance of rapport.

Note that some content covered in this chapter may be sensitive, particularly when discussing elements of sociolects such as gender and sexuality. Please be mindful of your own and others' lived experiences when exploring these topics.

Key knowledge covered:

- social and personal variation (sociolects and idiolects) in language according to factors such as age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspirations and education
- the ways in which the language of individuals and the language of groups is shaped by social expectations and community attitudes
- the relationship between social attitudes and language choices

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Sociolect	A variety of language used by a particular group of people who share aspects of their identity such as age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspirations and education.
Idiolect	An individual's unique use of language, shaped by their personal experiences, background and context.

Sociolects

A **sociolect**, a blend of 'social dialect', is a variety of language that is associated with a particular social group or community. The concept of a sociolect originates in sociolinguistics, a field of study that explores the relationship between language and society, recognising that our social identities and affiliations significantly influence the way we use language.

A sociolect may contain lexical choices that are specific to a social group, as well as phonological variations, grammatical structures, and discourse and pragmatic features such as politeness norms. These language choices are often used to support group membership and belonging, create a shared sense of identity and reinforce feelings of solidarity.

Sociolects encompass language features that are representative of age, gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, aspirations and education.

Age

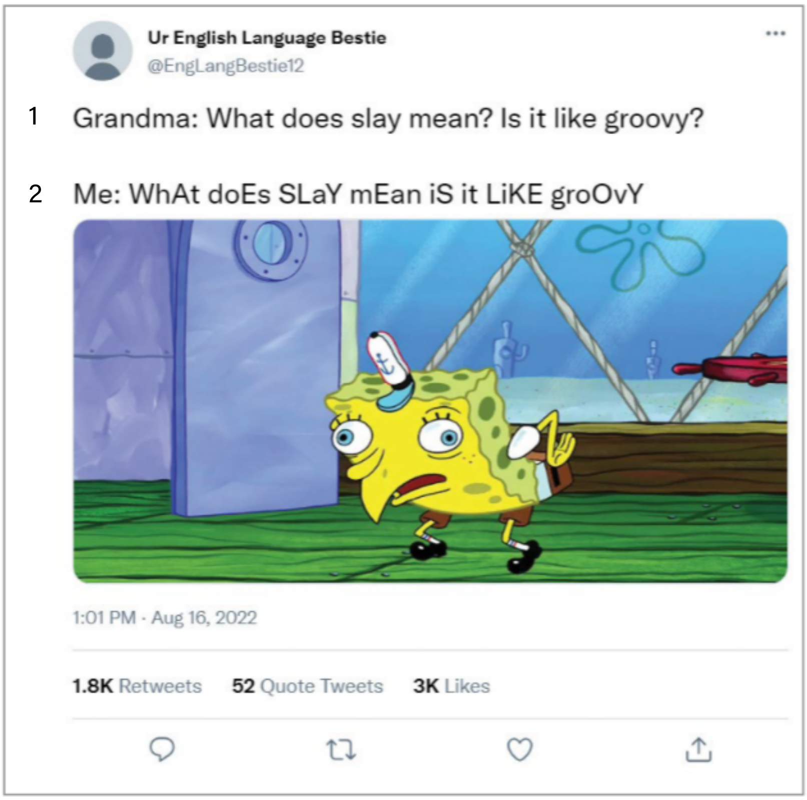
Both our **age** and the generation to which we belong are important aspects of our notion of personal identity in Australian society. Some language features that speakers and writers use, particularly with informal language, are intrinsically linked to their age or generation.

Slang is one common marker of age. Each generation tends to develop its own set of slang terms and phrases, often to establish a unique identity and differentiate themselves from older generations. Such terms can be influenced by various factors including cultural events, technological advancements, popular media and societal changes.

For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, slang terms that were popular among young people included 'groovy' and 'far out'. In the 1990s, 'rad' and 'bling' were common. More recently, younger generations have introduced 'no cap' and 'rizz'. Over time, some slang terms may fall out of use, while others become integrated into the everyday language of that generation of speakers. The diversity in slang vocabularies between speakers of different ages is an example of a sociolect, as it demonstrates how language use can vary based on social group – in this case, the generation of the speaker.

Worked example

Consider the following analysis of generational slang usage in the meme below.



Ur English Language Bestie
@EngLangBestie12

1 Grandma: What does slay mean? Is it like groovy?

2 Me: WhAt doEs SLaY mEan iS it LiKE groOvY

1:01 PM · Aug 16, 2022

1.8K Retweets **52** Quote Tweets **3K** Likes

The SpongeBob SquarePants meme depicted above is being used to mock the 1960s slang adjective 'groovy' (lines 1 and 2), implying that it is out of date compared to slang used by younger generations, such as 'slay' (lines 1 and 2). The post makes humorous reference to older speakers using slang, typically as a method of trying to appear cool or trendy to today's adolescents. The use of the SpongeBob meme reinforces the division between generations, as the meme format is primarily used by younger generations and may not be understood by older generations. This demonstrates how both language and the representation of it can be incomprehensible between generations.

Identifies examples from the text, using relevant metalanguage.

Interprets the significance of the example in relation to age and language use.

Develop your understanding 15.1

1 Scan the code or click here to watch a TikTok by Western Sydney University about generational differences in language use. Images from the TikTok are also reproduced on the following page. Write a short paragraph discussing the TikTok in relation to age and the use of slang.

1
"Hey, your last assignment was outstanding"
2
3
"You high-key slayed✨"
4

Source: Western Sydney University, https://www.tiktok.com/@westernsydneyu/video/7157895066743246082?q=gen%20z%20slang%20australia&t=1691630381828

2 Make a list of some slang terms you and your friends use that you would not expect your parents and teachers to be able to use correctly. Find examples of people using these slang terms online and annotate them with appropriate metalanguage.

Gender

Gender plays a significant role in linguistics and language use in many cultures, including Australia's. It influences the way people speak and the language they use, often reflecting societal norms, roles and expectations.

Culturally based associations and stereotypes relating to gender can be reflected both in the language used to describe gender and in the language used by those who identify with particular genders. In Western cultures, historically, there has been a traditional association of femininity with warmth and beauty, and an association of strength and bravery with masculinity, and this is reflected in language. Consider the adjective 'feminine' (and synonyms such as 'girly' and 'ladylike'), which might connote someone who is dainty and cares about appearances, while the term 'masculine' is more likely to conjure notions of machismo and toughness. However, it is important to note that, as with many aspects of identity, expectations around gender are culturally specific and can change over time, and this in turn is reflected in shifting language use.

For example, research on 1970s media coverage of female soccer players in Australia found that the language trivialised athletic ability and focused heavily on appearance and fashion, featuring headlines such as ‘gorgeous goal getters’ (Stell 2023). In contrast, Australian coverage of the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup placed a much greater emphasis on the sport itself and the players’ roles as athletes, such as in the articles ‘The Matildas inspire a new generation of football players ahead of the Women’s World Cup’ (Olumee 2023) and ‘Who is in the Matildas squad? The stories behind Australia’s Women’s World Cup heroes’ (Wedesweiler 2023).

Gendered patterns in language are not rigid and can vary greatly depending on culture, context, individual personality and the changing social attitudes towards gender representation. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of diverse gender identities in Australian society, which is also reflected in language use. The use of gender-neutral pronouns and titles has become more common, particularly in institutions including universities, workplaces and government bodies, who are increasingly implementing policies to respect and acknowledge individuals’ preferred pronouns. This includes providing options for gender-neutral pronouns (such as ‘they/them/theirs’) and terms of address (such as ‘Mx’) in forms and documents, as well as encouraging the practice of expressing personal pronoun preferences in settings such as meetings or introductions.

Language is dynamic and evolves with society. As societal views on gender continue to evolve, so too will the ways in which gender influences language use in Australia.

Worked example

The extract below comes from the *Australian Government Style Manual* (published by the Commonwealth of Australia in 2022). Consider the subsequent analysis of its use of language in relation to gender.

Inclusive language conveys gender equality and is gender neutral. Respect peoples’ preferences around gender and sexual identity with pronoun choice, job titles and personal titles.

Pronoun choice

Learn the user’s preferred pronoun. If it’s not clear and you can’t ask them, choose gender-neutral pronouns. The singular ‘they’ is gender neutral. It avoids specifying a person’s gender.

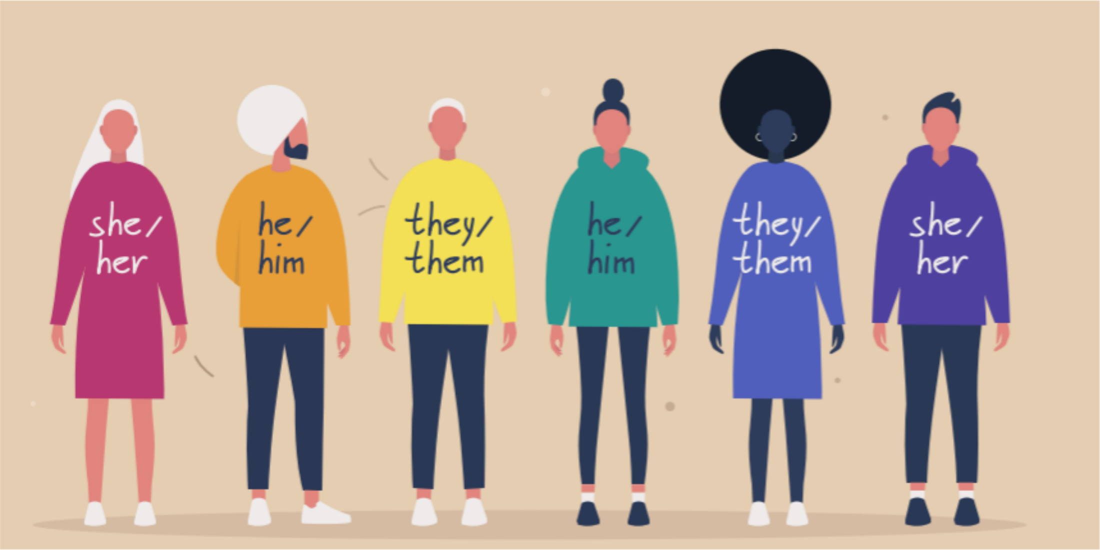
Source: Commonwealth of Australia, https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/

There has been an increasing acknowledgement of gender diversity in Australian institutions, as highlighted in the *Australian Government Style Manual* which, here, recommends the use of the gender-neutral singular pronoun 'they' (line 5) as opposed to the gendered pronouns 'he' or 'she'. The manual's recommendation is reinforced by its use of the pronoun 'them' (line 4) and the gender-neutral terms 'user' (line 4) and 'person's' (line 5), which avoid specifying gender and are therefore more inclusive. The use of nouns such as 'equality', 'respect' and 'preferences' (line 1) establishes the link between pronouns and politeness in Australian society, with the manual reminding people to be polite and considerate when dealing with others.

Establishes context for the analysis.

Identifies relevant examples from the text using appropriate metalanguage.

Provides analysis of the link between language use and social expectations.



Develop your understanding 15.2

1 Find an example of language that reinforces or subverts gender stereotypes and write a brief analysis. In your analysis you should explain the effect this language example is intended to have on an audience, and discuss the attitude to gender that underpins it.

2 Scan the code or click here to read an article from *The Conversation*: 'What are gender pronouns and why is it important to use the right ones?'

Use quotes from the article as a stimulus to respond to the following prompt.

'In contemporary Australian society, it is becoming increasingly necessary to acknowledge people with their correct pronouns.'

Discuss.

Sexuality

Sexuality can significantly impact language use. It can influence the words we choose, the way we speak and the topics we discuss.

In terms of lexical choices, individuals may use specific words or phrases that signal their sexual orientation or identity to others in their community. Specific terms and phrases have developed over time in the LGBTQIA+ community describing identities, experiences and concepts that had previously not been adequately covered by mainstream language. For example, ‘demisexual’, ‘androsexual’, and ‘pansexual’ are part of a lexicon that communicates specific aspects of sexual orientation. These terms allow individuals to express their sexuality more accurately and create a shared understanding within the community.

Some studies have suggested that prosodic features of speech, such as pitch and intonation, may be associated with some LGBTQIA+ communities. It’s important to note, however, that these characteristics are not universal or deterministic, and that any social group will always encompass a wide range of speech patterns.

Discourse can also be influenced by sexuality. For example, individuals may use language to challenge or reinforce societal norms and expectations related to sexuality. This could include the use of humour and irony, or the use of indirect language to express sexual identity. Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community may also rely on shared cultural knowledge to communicate their identity or experiences. This can serve as a form of safety or solidarity, allowing individuals to express themselves without explicitly stating their sexual orientation or gender identity.

For example, in the popular television show *Schitt’s Creek*, David Rose (Dan Levy) uses a wine bottle metaphor to explain his pansexuality. In a conversation with Stevie Budd (Emily Hampshire), David uses different types of wine to represent different genders and sexual orientations. When Stevie, who identifies as a red-wine drinker (a metaphor for being attracted to men), assumes that David also only drinks red wine, David corrects her by saying:

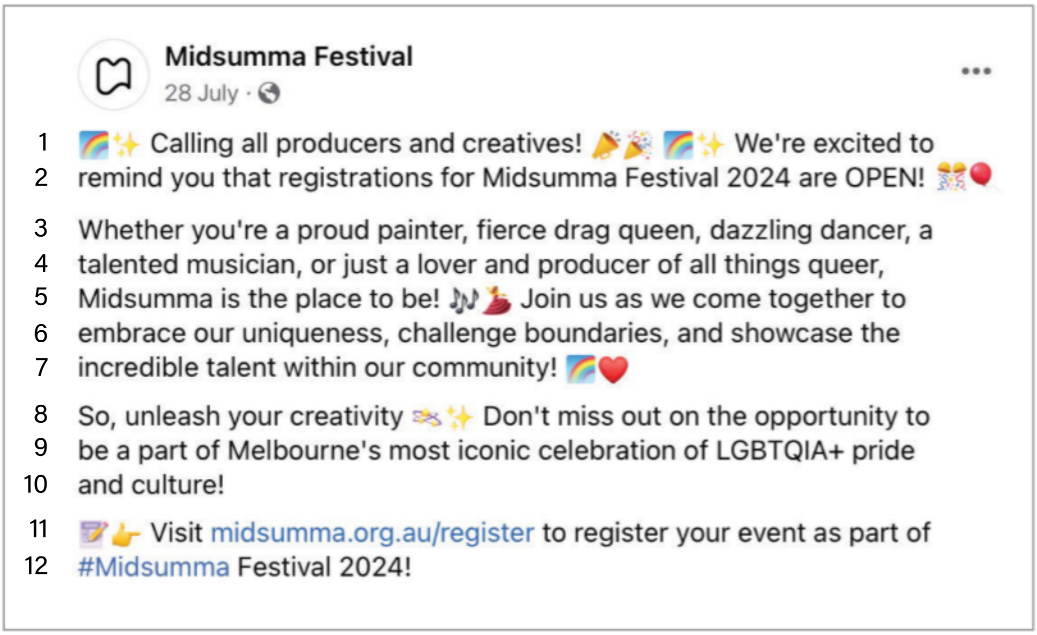
> *I do drink red wine. But I also drink white wine. And I’ve been known to sample the occasional rosé. And a couple summers back, I tried a merlot that used to be a chardonnay, which got a bit complicated.*

David’s analogy is a simple yet profound way to explain his pansexuality. He is saying that he is attracted to people regardless of their gender (the type of wine) and it’s the person (the wine itself), not their gender, that matters to him. This scene has been praised for its positive representation of pansexuality and its clear, relatable explanation of a complex concept. The metaphor, referred to as ‘the wine, not the label’, has been adopted by the LGBTQIA+ community worldwide, including in Australia.

When analysing language in terms of sexuality, it's essential to understand that language use is highly individual and can be influenced by many factors including, but not limited to, sexuality. While certain patterns may be observed at a group level, these should not be used to stereotype or make assumptions about individuals. Language is a powerful tool for expressing identity and can provide valuable insights into the diversity of human experience.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the Facebook post below, which is by Midsumma Festival, an LGBTQIA+ festival in Victoria.



Midsumma Festival
28 July ·

1 🌈✨ Calling all producers and creatives! 🎉🎊 🌈✨ We're excited to
2 remind you that registrations for Midsumma Festival 2024 are OPEN! 🎊🎈

3 Whether you're a proud painter, fierce drag queen, dazzling dancer, a
4 talented musician, or just a lover and producer of all things queer,
5 Midsumma is the place to be! 🎶💃 Join us as we come together to
6 embrace our uniqueness, challenge boundaries, and showcase the
7 incredible talent within our community! 🌈❤️

8 So, unleash your creativity 💫✨ Don't miss out on the opportunity to
9 be a part of Melbourne's most iconic celebration of LGBTQIA+ pride
10 and culture!

11 📝👉 Visit midsumma.org.au/register to register your event as part of
12 #Midsumma Festival 2024!

Source: Midsumma Festival,
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=658728896285724&set=a.618128227012458

The Facebook advertisement from Midsumma Festival utilises language that is common within the LGBTQIA+ community. The use of slang, such as the adjective 'fierce' on line 3, and the use of LGBTQIA+ vocabulary such as 'queer' (line 4) and 'drag queen' (line 3) establishes Midsumma Festival's identity as an experience that is designed for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The rainbow emoji (a symbol that is commonly used by the LGBTQIA+ community) on lines 1 and 7 is used to catch the attention of members of the community, while also creating a fun and visually interesting post. Lastly, the use of inclusive language (for example, referring to 'our community' on line 7) specifically signals to an LGBTQIA+ audience that Midsumma Festival is an environment that is inclusive and safe for them to enjoy.

Identifies examples from the text, using appropriate metalanguage.

Identifies how the examples construct the organisation's identity.

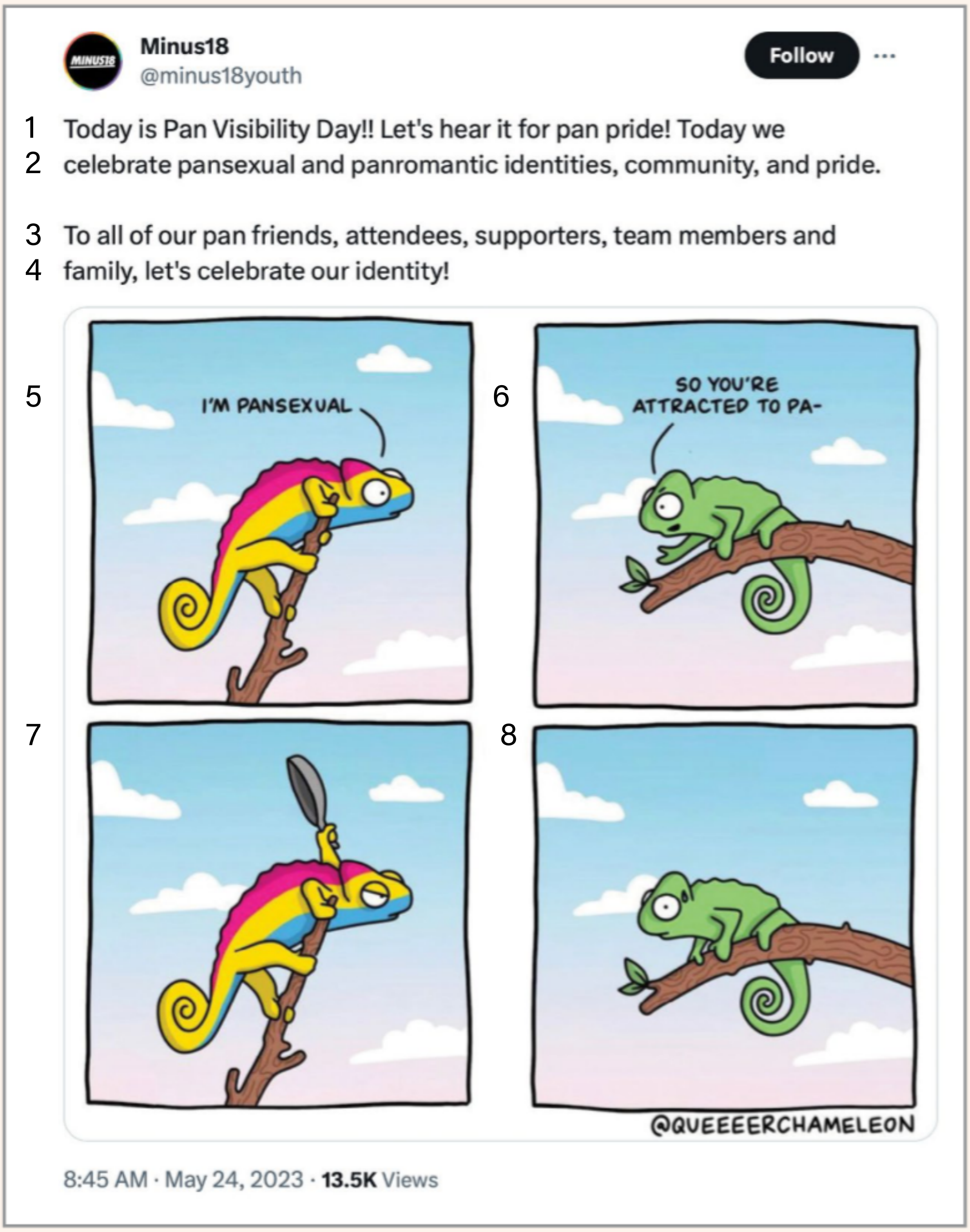
Analyses how the text uses language to appeal to a specific social group.

Develop your understanding 15.3

1 Scan the code or click here to explore a range of terms that can be used to describe sexuality and sexual attraction. Research four of them and summarise or define them in your own words, using appropriate metalanguage. An example has been completed for you.

***ace:** a shortening of the term 'asexual', which refers to someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others.*

2 Consider the following cartoon posted by Minus18 on social media in 2023. How has language play been used in the post to reaffirm group membership?



Minus18
@minus18youth

Today is Pan Visibility Day!! Let's hear it for pan pride! Today we celebrate pansexual and panromantic identities, community, and pride.

To all of our pan friends, attendees, supporters, team members and family, let's celebrate our identity!

8:45 AM · May 24, 2023 · **13.5K** Views

Source: Minus18, https://twitter.com/minus18youth/status/1661141210885496832

Occupation

Language use can vary significantly from one job or **occupation** to another due to several factors, including the influence of the profession's culture and the need for communication to be precise.

There are various aspects of language that can change depending on occupation. Formality can vary greatly, as different industries will have different expectations. A lawyer, for example, is likely to use more formal language in order to increase their credibility, and archaic terms may be used as legal jargon, further reinforcing a higher level of formality. In comparison, a youth worker may use a more informal communicative style in order to build rapport and establish trust with their young clients.

Different occupations may also rely on different discourse and pragmatics, and individuals will vary their language use to best fit their profession. Teachers might use explanatory language and prompt students for feedback, and adjacency pairs may be common in the classroom, such as when teachers ask questions for students to answer. A salesperson might make greater use of persuasive, complimentary and assertive language, and tend to seek common ground and show empathy to help make a sale.

Technical language (such as jargon) and occupation-specific abbreviations (such as shortenings, acronyms and initialisms) allow for efficiency when communicating occupation-relevant information. For example, a mechanic might use jargonistic terms relating to the domain of automotive technology, such as 'backfire' (loud explosion in the engine's intake or exhaust); a chef might refer to a 'roux' (a sauce made by mixing fat and flour); a VCE student might refer to a 'SAC' (a piece of school-assessed coursework); and a marketing manager might use the initialism 'SEO' (search engine optimisation – a strategy to increase website traffic).

The use of jargon is the most common marker of a writer or speaker's occupation. Command of jargon can be a marker of prestige, and jargon can be used to exclude people who do not share the specific profession. In this way, jargon as part of a sociolect can be used to create and identify group membership.

Worked example

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand released changes made to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in March 2023. The following extract is the report on the changes for asthma. Consider the extract and the analysis of how the use of jargon can aid clear and efficient communication.

Salbutamol (Asmol CFC-FREE®) (100 mcg/actuation 200 dose) for the treatment of asthma has had an amendment to delete item codes 8288F and 3495Y due to the new dose counter version available as an unrestricted benefit on the PBS. No Supply Only arrangement.

Source: USANZ, https://usanz.org.au/news-updates/our-announcements/pbs-changes-from-1-march-2023

Industry-specific terminology, such as 'Salbutamol', '8288F', '3495Y' and 'No Supply Only arrangement' (lines 1, 2 and 3–4) is used to provide clarity for the targeted occupational group: surgeons and health professionals. The employment of such jargon not only increases efficiency but also demonstrates shared expertise, as the highly technical language contributes to a technical register and references specific knowledge that individuals outside of these occupations would not have.

Provides examples from the text, using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses the purpose of the example in the text.

Provides secondary analysis to demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of the topic.

Develop your understanding 15.4

Analyse the below text for the use of social influencer jargon.

As a social influencer, I'm all about creating user-generated content that resonates with my followers. I've seen the rise of 'stock content' and how niches are getting niche-r, but I believe in authenticity over curation. My journey from being an influencer to a business owner has been transformative, and I'm excited to explore creator-focused marketplaces that are exploding onto the scene. Remember, in this digital landscape, it's all about connecting, engaging and staying true to your brand.

Interests

Often without realising, speakers and writers vary their language when they are interacting with others who share similar **interests**. This can affect individuals' lexical choices, as well as the style of language they use to communicate.

Use of jargon is a prominent feature of language that reflects a person's interests. For example, a gardening enthusiast might use the adjective 'heirloom' to describe a highly valued historical variety of plant, or a gaming enthusiast might use the verb 'spawn' to describe an object appearing in a game world. These language choices function as shortcuts to identify the speaker or writer as a member of a particular social group.

In addition to using jargon, an individual can also demonstrate their own personal interests through discourse and pragmatics. When discussing their hobbies, people often use vivid and descriptive vocabulary, such as sensory language describing how things look, sound, feel, smell or taste. For example, a wine enthusiast might describe a wine's flavour, smell and colour in great detail. Interests are often associated with enjoyment and passion, so emotive language is also common. This can involve expressions of excitement, satisfaction, anticipation or other emotions.

The specific ways in which a person's language is influenced by their interests can vary widely based on who they are speaking to. It is important to consider the situational and cultural context in which an exchange occurs when analysing language features.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of the following article about the 2023 film *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. The article was posted on the website run by Supanova, an organisation that manages events relating to popular culture, not long before the film's release.

1 As we're sure you've already heard, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* is swinging into
2 Australian theatres on June 1st. There's been delays, theories, cameos, and even a 14-minute
3 clip released at CinemaCon, all of which have fans excitedly awaiting the follow-up film to the
4 outstandingly successful release of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* back in 2018.

5 The latest trailers reveal some of the integral plot points that will send us reeling across the
6 Spider-Verse once more. They establish that there's an even wider range of universes beyond
7 what Miles and audiences alike have already seen, and the on-screen debut of the Spider
8 Society is finally here! Between the countless Spider-People cameos, and an introduction to
9 Miguel O'Hara (aka Spider-Man 2099) there's so much to look forward to! So, to channel our
10 uncontainable excitement, here's what you can look forward to seeing in *Spider-Man: Across*
11 *the Spider-Verse*.

Source: Gabriella Marcelline, https://www.supanova.com.au/what-we-know-about-spider-man-across-the-spider-verse/

The post by Gabriella Marcelline for Supanova Comic Con is specifically designed to appeal to people who are interested in comics and comic book movies. The text has both referential and emotive functions. Declarative sentences, such as on lines 1–4, establish crucial information about the movie and its release date, while more exclamative sentences such as 'there's so much to look forward to!' (line 9), are used to create excitement among fans of the movie. Marcelline also appeals to fans by using unexplained references to the Spider-Verse series, referring to the main character as 'Miles' (line 7), instead of 'the protagonist'. These in-group references are used with the assumption that the reader is already familiar with the details of the series. This helps support group membership and belonging, as fans are treated as being knowledgeable and well informed.

Identifies the primary functions of the text.

Provides examples from the text, using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses how the text uses language to appeal to a specific social group.

Develop your understanding 15.5

Select one of your own interests and consider the elements of your language that reflect this interest. Keep a journal for a week where you record and annotate specific lexis, subsystem patterns or discourse features and strategies you use when discussing or participating in your area of interest.

Education

As we saw in Unit 3, formal language is often linked to perceptions about **education**. In Australia, most educational institutions use SAE, and formal SAE tends to be associated with those who are educated and well read. When authors use formal SAE that complies with prescribed orthographic and grammatical conventions, they may be perceived as being more educated than when they do not. Consequently, those who use language that deviates from SAE may be negatively judged as having a lower level of education, even if they are in fact very educated. Through these judgements and broad societal perceptions, we can manipulate our language in order to appear more educated.

Despite the common associations between an individual's level of education and their use of formal SAE, education can influence language use in other ways, as it also exposes us to a diversity of voices. We learn from teachers who bring their own linguistic backgrounds into the classroom, we interact with peers who each have their own way of speaking and writing, and we read texts written by authors from different times and places, each with their own distinctive use of language. These factors can in turn influence our own patterns of language use.

Language and education are also deeply intertwined, each shaping and influencing the other. The language that we are exposed to and use allows us to gain and express knowledge. Every lesson we learn is mediated through language and as we delve into various subjects, from the sciences to the humanities, we encounter new words, new ways of structuring sentences and new styles of discourse. These exposures broaden our linguistic repertoires, introducing us to new ways of using language.

Worked example

The following text is a quote by Eddie Woo, an award-winning Australian maths teacher, as he joined the University of Sydney's School of Education and Social Work as a Professor of Practice. Consider the text and the subsequent analysis.

1 Teachers are the single most important factor in a student's learning experience and in their
2 educational outcomes. Sure, there are numerous other factors that contribute to student success
3 and student outcomes, but many of these factors you can't change – you can't change a
4 student's postcode or their parents or their genetic makeup.

5 But what you can do is ensure they get a world-class, state-of-the-art education, delivered by
6 passionate teachers who are well-informed by evidence, who have been able to develop their
7 practice in collaborative ways, and who are equipped to teach with innovative and up-to-date
8 strategies.

Source: Eddie Woo, https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2023/03/28/eddie-woo-joins-sydney-school-of-education.html

Eddie Woo's use of Standard Australian English demonstrates both his level of education and his identity as an educator. The use of adjective phrases, such as 'world-class' (line 5), 'state-of-the-art' (line 5) and 'well-informed' (line 6) demonstrates Woo's broad linguistic repertoire, which can be typical for someone who has been through tertiary education. Furthermore, Woo uses vocabulary from the semantic domain of education, such as the noun phrases 'learning experience' (line 1) and 'educational outcomes' (line 2), which help to establish his identity as an educator. This further reinforces that Woo is well educated and has been through many years of schooling, as teachers in Australia are required to complete university degrees. Additionally, the use of the somewhat hyperbolic noun phrase 'the single most important factor' to describe the role of teachers in the declarative in line 1 establishes Woo as an authoritative expert in the topic of education, indicating to the audience that his perspective on teaching and learning is valuable.

Identifies relevant examples in the text using appropriate metalanguage.

Analyses how the language presents the author's identity.

Develop your understanding 15.6

Scan the code or click here to watch a video by RMIT University about fire-resistant properties of fungi, then answer the following questions.

1 What kind of identity are the university and the speakers in the video aiming to convey?

2 How does the language used in the video reflect the speakers' level of education?

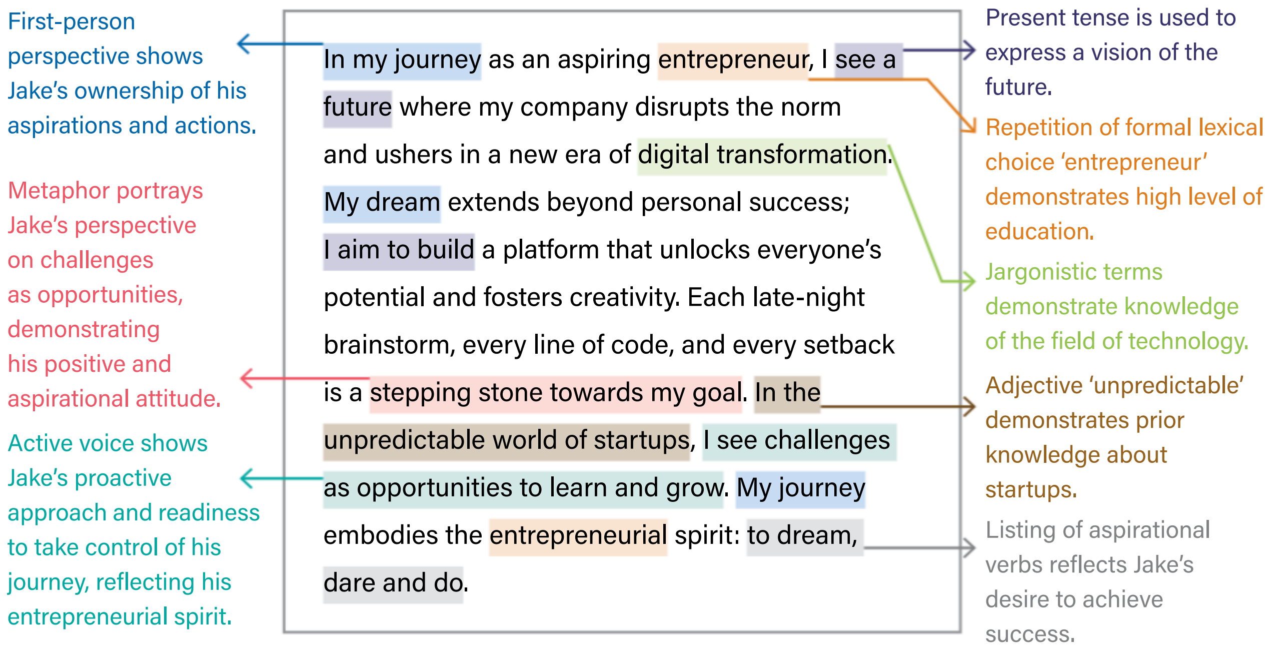
Aspirations

We can use language to represent ourselves in the ways in which we wish to be perceived, and to help us achieve goals and ambitions – our **aspirations**. Lexical choices, for example, can reflect desires to belong to particular groups, both professionally and socially. Similarly, pronunciation, grammar and syntax can also reflect aspirational intentions in situational and cultural contexts. Language users can also modify the way they engage in a discourse to reflect their wants and needs, for example by increasing their level of politeness or using a particular register.

While aspirations are often associated with more formal contexts of language use, it is just as common for speakers and writers to have aspirations that link to informal contexts, such as desiring to belong to a particular in-group. Consider the language you would use in a job interview compared to the language you would use in a social group. In both situations, your aspirations shape your language, such as your lexical choices and level of formality.

Worked example

Consider the following message from Jake, the CEO of a tech start-up company. The annotations highlight how his language demonstrates his aspirations.



In my journey as an aspiring entrepreneur, I see a future where my company disrupts the norm and ushers in a new era of digital transformation. My dream extends beyond personal success; I aim to build a platform that unlocks everyone's potential and fosters creativity. Each late-night brainstorm, every line of code, and every setback is a stepping stone towards my goal. In the unpredictable world of startups, I see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. My journey embodies the entrepreneurial spirit: to dream, dare and do.

First-person perspective shows Jake's ownership of his aspirations and actions.

Metaphor portrays Jake's perspective on challenges as opportunities, demonstrating his positive and aspirational attitude.

Active voice shows Jake's proactive approach and readiness to take control of his journey, reflecting his entrepreneurial spirit.

Present tense is used to express a vision of the future.

Repetition of formal lexical choice 'entrepreneur' demonstrates high level of education.

Jargonistic terms demonstrate knowledge of the field of technology.

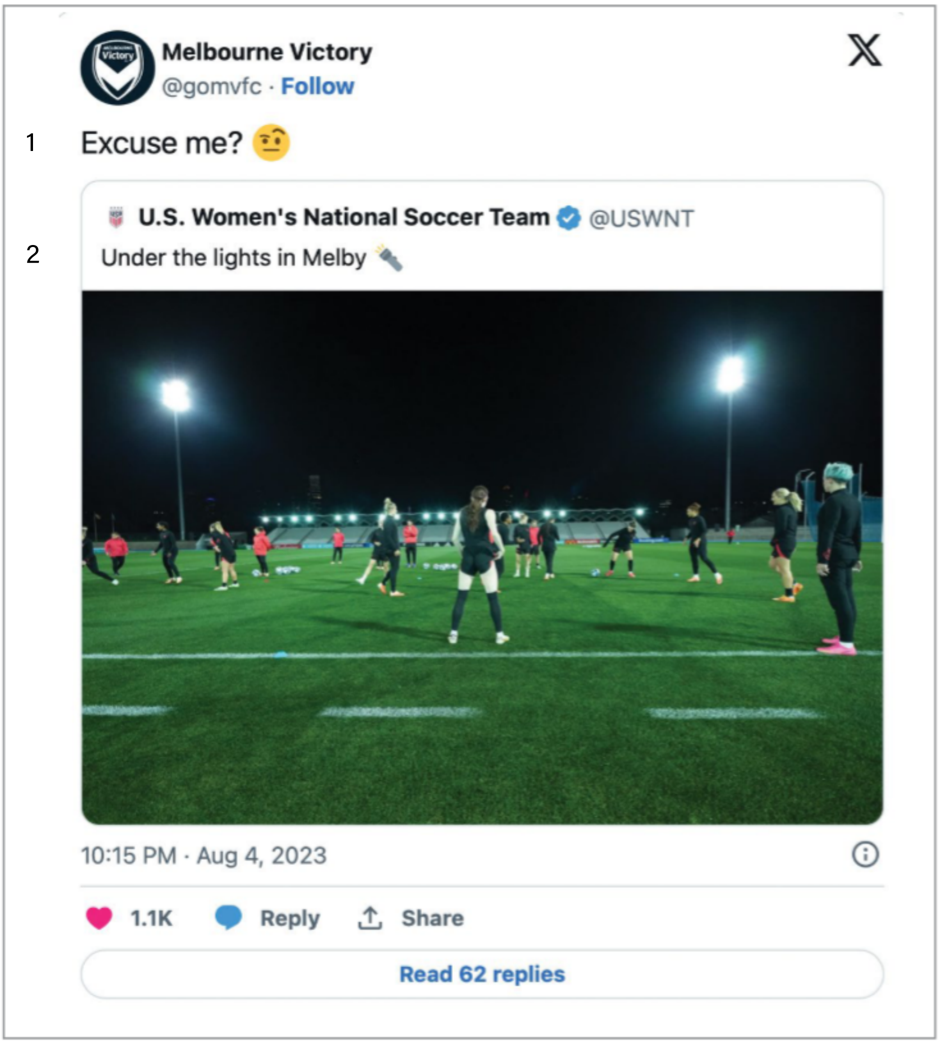
Adjective 'unpredictable' demonstrates prior knowledge about startups.

Listing of aspirational verbs reflects Jake's desire to achieve success.

Because aspirations relate to the use of language to reflect how we want to be perceived, they don't always align with the reality of how we actually are.

Worked example

Consider the post by Melbourne Victory in 2023 in response to the US Women's National Soccer Team, and the commentary on news.com.au. The following analysis examines the US Women's National Soccer Team's attempt to use Australian language features, and the subsequent backlash it received.



Melbourne Victory
@gomvfc · Follow

1 Excuse me? 🤨

U.S. Women's National Soccer Team @USWNT
2 Under the lights in Melby 🔦

10:15 PM · Aug 4, 2023

3 The butchering of Aussie slang didn't go unnoticed with fans far and wide calling them out for
4 calling the city a term no Melburnian has ever used.

5 AAP's Anna Harrington wrote: 'Melby?! Sweden should go through on default.'
6 Journalist Leonardo Puglisi wrote: 'Calling Melbourne "Melby" should lead to immediate
7 prison time.'

8 Journalist Mark Gottlieb wrote: 'This is an international incident. Far worse than the Bairstow
9 stumping … next thing Albo and Biden are gonna be firing lame burns on each other.'

Source: James McKern, https://www.news.com.au/sport/football/world-cup/team-usa-destroyed-by-melburnians-over-one-word-butchery/news-story/2f56c3bd70b809ddd066fe74dd109c33

In mid-2023, US Women's National Soccer Team posted a message to their fans, exclaiming 'Under the lights in Melby' (line 2) in an aspirational attempt to use a common Australian language feature to playfully suit the situational context of where the US team was playing. The use of the hypocorism 'Melby' provoked an immediate response from Melbourne Victory, a Victorian soccer team, who posted 'Excuse me?' alongside a questioning-face emoji that implied face-threatening offence had been taken (line 1). Similar responses from across Australia occurred, with 'fans far and wide calling [the team] out for calling the city a term no Melburnian has ever used' (lines 3–4). This relates specifically to the use of hypocoristic suffixation in Australian vernacular. In Victoria, the acceptable shortened form for its major city is 'Melbs', not 'Melby'. Journalistic tongue-in-cheek responses, such as Puglisi stating that the use of 'Melby' should 'lead to immediate prison time' (lines 6–7) and Gottlieb's response 'this is an international incident' (line 8), suggest that when language does not align with the accepted conventions of a particular group, it can be met with derision and ridicule – in this case, playfully.

Identifies relevant example from the text using appropriate metalanguage.

Links metalanguage to elements from other relevant areas of study.

Analyses how the example relates to a specific language feature.

Discusses the unaccepted language convention in the example, and acknowledges the acceptable language choice.

Draws wider conclusions about the outcome of not meeting the norms.

Develop your understanding 15.7

Examine the following opening of a job interview where the applicant is applying for a highly technical position in a company that focuses on sustainability. Using appropriate metalanguage, analyse how the applicant's use of language indicates their specific aspirations.

Interviewer: Thank you for coming in today\
I've had a (.) chance to review your resume (.) but I'd like to hear from you.
Why are you interested in this position at our company?
Applicant: Thank you for considering me/
I've always (..) admired your company's commitment to (.) <A innovation
and sustainability. A>
I believe that m=y (.) skills (.) and experience align well with your mission/
And I'm particularly excited about (.) the opportunity to <F contribute F> to
your upcoming projects and learn from the talented team here.

Scan the code or click here to view a video on using personal anecdotes as contemporary language examples, on our webpage of further resources.

Idiolects

An **idiolect** is the unique way of speaking and writing that belongs to an individual. It's a personal dialect that includes specific lexis, grammar, phonology and other linguistic features that are distinctive to that person. Everyone has an idiolect, which is shaped by various factors including cultural background, social background, education and personal experiences.

When a person speaks or writes, their idiolect is reflected in their choice of words, sentence structures, expressions and even the topics they choose to discuss. An individual's idiolect is often a blend of the regional, social and cultural variations they are exposed to, combined with their own idiosyncratic methods of communication.

For example, a person might use certain vocabulary or phrases that are common in their professional field, adopt colloquial language from their peer group and use specific expressions or phonological features that are characteristic of their cultural or ethnic community. This blending within an idiolect can result in a unique linguistic profile that reflects the individual's multifaceted social identity. Therefore, understanding the role of variation is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of an individual's idiolect.

When analysing language use to determine characteristics of a person's idiolect, there are several key features to consider. These features, listed below, can reveal aspects of a person's social and cultural background, their personal beliefs and values and their individual personality traits.

- lexical choices
- sociolect variations
- ethnocultural variations
- discourse features and strategies
- code switching
- politeness markers

It's important to remember that people can adapt their language use in different contexts, so the language features associated with a person's idiolect can be fluid and changeable.

Tip

Idiolects are unique to an individual and it's important that you outline the different elements comprising a person's idiolect when discussing their language use, particularly when you are analysing a public figure.

Worked example

Scan the code or click here to watch a video of comedian Dave Hughes performing at the Opening Night Comedy Allstars Supershow during the Melbourne Comedy Festival in 2023. (Please note that this video contains swearing.)

Consider the following linguistic analysis of his idiolect.

Dave Hughes, an Australian stand-up comedian, is known for his distinctive idiolect that contributes significantly to his comedic style. His idiolect is characterised by a strong Broad Australian accent, loud volume, a drawling speech pattern and a deadpan delivery. The term 'larrikin personality' is often used to describe him and suggests a casual, irreverent and cheeky style of speech, which is a common feature of Australian humour. His deadpan delivery adds a layer of subtlety and surprise to his comedy, such as when he states 'Melbourne has bounced back from the pandemic, except for the Docklands Wheel'. At face value, this is simply a declarative statement, but the laughter response from the audience makes it clear that there is shared understanding of why this comment is funny; the Docklands Wheel is a failed tourist attraction in Melbourne's CBD and its failure has had little to do with the pandemic. This appeals to the majority Australian audience at the Comedy Festival, as Australians often take pride in their national failures. Overall, Hughes' idiolect reflects his professional identity as a comedian as well as his cultural identity as an Australian.

Introduces the context of the video, and outlines the specific features comprising the speaker's idiolect.

Identifies relevant example in the text.

Analyses how the example links to the author's personal identity and language use.

Develop your understanding 15.8

Aaron Chen is a stand-up comedian and actor. He is a regular panellist on Network Ten's *Have You Been Paying Attention?*

Scan the code or click here to watch a video of Aaron Chen on *Have You Been Paying Attention?*, and write an analysis of his idiolect as presented in the video.

The influence of social expectations and community attitudes

Language choices are significantly influenced by social expectations and community attitudes. These expectations and attitudes can be seen as a form of social pressure that guides individuals to use language in ways that are considered acceptable or appropriate in their particular social context. For example, as we have seen in Unit 3, the use of language features typically associated with formality or informality is heavily dependent on context.

Group membership and belonging

Social expectations and attitudes can have a significant impact on many aspects of language use. In different social circles or communities, for example, the use of AAEs, migrant ethnolects or SAE can be a marker of group membership and identity. These different English varieties can link to perceptions of an Australian national identity, and stereotypes and prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes can encourage a speaker to stifle or highlight particular elements of their idiolects.

A speaker or writer will vary their linguistic repertoires to meet social and community expectations for a particular context, avoid negative judgements or gain benefits of particular styles of language (e.g. using specialised jargon to indicate that they are knowledgeable and competent). They may also choose to use language to distance themselves from groups they don't want to be associated with.

In addition to shaping individual language choices, social expectations and community attitudes can also influence language change and variation on a larger scale. When a community develops negative attitudes towards a particular dialect, speakers might start to abandon those speech patterns in favour of more socially accepted ones. On the other hand, positive attitudes to a particular way of speaking can help to promote its use. In Australia, for example, we have seen that at times the Broad Australian accent is associated with authenticity and 'Australianness', which can encourage its use among Australians, whereas the Cultivated Australian accent is often associated with pomposity and outdated values, which can discourage its use. Thus, social expectations and community attitudes play a crucial role in shaping both individual language choices and broader language trends.

Expectations based on context

When analysing a text, it's important to consider the situational and cultural context in order to infer the role that social and community attitudes and expectations play in the construction of the text.

Each situational and cultural context will have a set of conventions and norms dictating what is and is not considered acceptable to say. Politicians, for example, are often expected to use inclusive language that respects diversity and avoids discrimination, and news reports are expected to use clear, concise and unbiased language.

Community expectations also play a role in shaping the language used within sociolects and, consequently, personal idiolects. Different age groups often have different language norms and expectations, such as the diverse types of slang across generations. Similarly, interest groups or subcultures often have their own specific language norms. For example, gamers, sports fans or hobbyist groups may use particular terms or phrases which they expect other group members to understand.

Regardless of whether a speaker or writer chooses to conform to social and community standards, the key expectation in any communication context is respect for diversity and individual identity. People are increasingly recognising the importance of using language in ways that respect others' chosen identities and that do not discriminate or exclude.

Worked example

Consider the contemporary linguistic discussion on how community attitudes can shape wider language use.

Elements of sociolects that are influenced by gender have affected language use in wider contemporary Australian society, as community attitudes to gender become more inclusive. For instance, Australian institutions have recently begun to encourage the use of gender-neutral language. The *Australian Government Style Manual*, a publication covering language guidelines for content published by the Australian Government, states that individuals should ‘choose gender-neutral pronouns’ such as the singular ‘they’ when unsure of a person’s preferred pronouns. The use of ‘they’ as a singular pronoun has been contentious in the past, but now the language that gender diverse people use within their own community has become more commonly used in wider Australian society, to promote inclusivity. Similarly, the Victorian Government has also published the LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide, an online resource for Victorian public sector employees, which the general public can access. The Inclusive Language Guide has sections on gender diversity and gives guidance on how to avoid ‘stigmatised terms’ when discussing gender, promoting the language that is used by people within the gender diverse community. The adoption of this language in the guide itself ensures that individuals who are not in the gender diverse community can learn about how to respectfully refer to all people. Therefore, institutions play an integral role in prescribing language use and ensuring that contemporary attitudes to gender and the associated vocabulary become codified within Standard Australian English, promoting inclusivity and acceptance in the wider community.

Establishes context for the discussion.

Identifies contemporary examples.

Links back to topic.

Develop your understanding 15.9

Scan the code or click here to read the article, ‘Is it ever OK to use profanity in advertising? 4 industry execs reveal their candid thoughts’. The article was published on *Mumbrella*, a website that discusses marketing and media in Australia. (Please note that this article contains swearing.)

1. Document the different views the four industry executives hold about what consumers want in terms of the language used in advertising.
2. What does this suggest about social expectations and attitudes regarding swearing in advertising?
3. What are some of the executives’ opinions about why some ads using profanity are more acceptable than others?

CHAPTER
16

Language and prestige

Whether through direct commands, control of discourse or subtle linguistic choices, those in positions of power often use language to reinforce their authority and influence perceptions and behaviours. Recognising these dynamics is crucial for understanding the intricate relationship between language, power and social hierarchies.

In this chapter we consider how language can be used in various contexts to assert power and authority, and gain social prestige. We explore how speakers and writers can draw on their linguistic repertoires to demonstrate group membership and conform to overt and covert norms.

Key knowledge covered:

- the ways in which people draw on their linguistic repertoire to gain power and prestige, including exploiting overt and covert norms
- code switching as a means of demonstrating group membership and belonging

Metalanguage and linguistic terms

Overt norms	Linguistic behaviours and patterns that are valued by wider society.
Covert norms	Linguistic behaviours and patterns that are not valued by wider society but, instead, are valued by a specific group or community.
Prestige	The high status or respect that is given to something or someone based on their perceived importance, success or cultural value.

Power and prestige in language use

Language is often an indicator of social structure, power dynamics and prestige. Power dynamics may be the result of a social hierarchy, and may depend on context. For example, a shop manager would generally have more authority than the sales staff, and a teacher would have more authority in the classroom than a student.

The way language is used can reflect, reinforce or challenge societal hierarchies and values, and the way in which it does so is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. The following paragraphs outline a few common ways in which power can be reflected and reinforced in language use.

Imperatives

The use of direct commands or imperatives can be a clear linguistic sign of asserting authority or power. Consider the following ways to phrase a request.

Examples

'Close the door.'

'Would you mind closing the door?'

While both of these requests can assert power, the first indicates a presumed unequal level of power between the person demanding the action and the recipient of the demand. The sentence does not have the politeness markers that exist in the second example, and their absence conveys that the speaker has a higher level of authority than the listener.

Discourse strategies

Power and authority can be achieved by using various discourse strategies to control a conversation.

- **Dominating the topic** of a conversation or consistently steering it in a desired direction can signal that one speaker has power over another.
- **Frequent interruptions** or talking over someone can be a way of asserting dominance in a conversation.
- **Taking longer and more frequent turns** can also serve to assert control and power, particularly when it reduces the chance for others to provide their own input.

These behaviours can make other participants feel undervalued and overshadowed, reinforcing speaker dominance in the conversation. While this can be perceived as rude in some situations, in settings with an expected social hierarchy, those with a higher level of power and authority can assert dominance without correction from others and without obvious offence being taken.

Specialised language

Power can also be asserted through the vocabulary we choose to use. Using specialised language such as jargon or bureaucratic language can exclude those who aren't familiar with it, reinforcing hierarchies based on knowledge or expertise.

People can also gain power by using specialised language to obfuscate, intentionally making things vague and unclear for their audience. People who obfuscate might be more likely to 'talk around' topics, using ambiguous or inaccessible language to ensure that they maintain the power in a conversation.

→ For more on obfuscation, see page 119.

Using politeness strategies selectively

Choosing to be polite to some individuals and less so to others can be another way of establishing social hierarchies and power dynamics. For example, an individual may feel that being rude to a waiter establishes their power as the customer. Power can be demonstrated through the careful selection of language to reflect, create or reinforce status and social distance, such as by using formal politeness strategies in situations where they are typically not required. Requiring others to use a more formal term of address, such as a judge expecting others to refer to them as 'Your Honour' in an Australian courtroom, can also assert a person's higher status or power.

Relying on linguistic prestige

Speaking a standard variety such as SAE can confer prestige upon the speaker, as such varieties are associated with education, socioeconomic status and cultural capital.

Furthermore, advocating for a standard form of a language and deeming other forms as incorrect or inferior is another way of asserting social dominance. This type of attitude can occur both culturally (such as when speakers of SAE assume that ethnolects are 'incorrect') and generationally (for example, older generations believing that modern trends in language use or spelling are 'wrong'). Correcting others' language use, especially in unsolicited ways, can be an assertion of linguistic authority and superiority.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of turn-taking in the following transcript of a conversational exchange between friends Ana and Siti.

1 Ana: Did you watch *Thank God You're Here* last night?
2 Siti: Nah (.) I was watching the newest [episode of-]
3 Ana: [The best bit] was when Julia
4 Zemiro was scared by that snake/
5 Siti: O=h, really?
6 I've heard mixed [reviews abou-]
7 Ana: [Everyone I know] has been talking about it.
8 I can't belie=ve you didn't see it\

In this conversation, Ana's turn-taking demonstrates dominance in the conversation. While she gives up the floor to Siti in lines 1 and 4, she does not allow Siti to take a complete turn to respond in full. Instead, Ana overlaps Siti mid-utterance (lines 2 and 3; lines 6 and 7) and does not acknowledge that she has done so. Siti's lack of reaction to Ana's interruptions confirms that there is a power difference between the two. Despite her actions being directly face threatening, Siti does not challenge Ana, nor does she demonstrate that she has taken offence.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Discusses how the examples relate to the linked topics of face needs, power and dominance in the conversation.

Develop your understanding 16.1

Read the transcript of a conversation between a customer and a salesperson at an electronics store. Analyse the transcript for language features that demonstrate power and authority.

1	Customer:	My computer seems slo=w (.)
2		Can you help?
3	Salesperson:	Well (..) it sounds like your computer's RAM,
4		might be experiencing <A suboptimal memory allocation
5		due to fragmented virtual address space. A>
6	Customer:	U=h (.) what does that (..) mean?
7	Salesperson:	Your machine's non-contiguous memory blocks\
8		are causing the CPU to overutilise its L1 and L2 cache\
9		leading to latency in the memory fetch cycle.
10		Only thing that can fix it is a new computer.
11		<A How about we look at some we have in stock? A>
12	Customer:	I – (..) uh, (.) yeah ok\

Overt norms

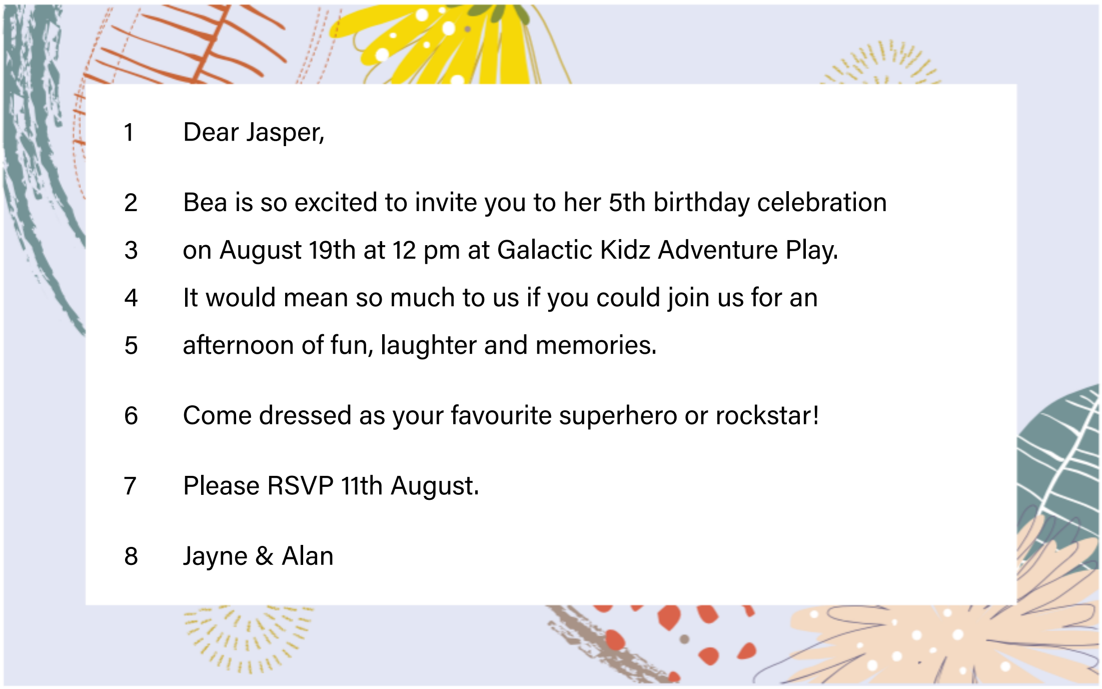
Overt norms refer to the linguistic behaviours and patterns that are valued in wider society. These are often associated with standard language use and prescriptivist attitudes. Discussion of overt language types in Australia typically refers to more formal use of SAE and its social value and recognition in many settings.

To comply with overt norms, language users would adhere to grammatical conventions that are taught in schools and are considered standard, such as avoiding double negatives, ensuring subject-verb agreement in sentences and favouring more formal terms over colloquialisms. Language also tends to conform to widely accepted conventions for specific text types or communication mediums. For example, when applying for a job, most applicants would adhere to overt norms by submitting a résumé with information such as their education, experience and contact details. Overt norms are also used to meet the expectations of politeness in broader society. In Australia, it is typically accepted that people in public will conform to accepted politeness norms, such as not making offensive jokes or comments where others might overhear.

The widely recognised social value for speaking a standard variant is known as **overt prestige**, and it arises due to the association between overt norms and factors such as education, authority and intelligence. This form of prestige is openly recognised and valued in society, especially in formal and public contexts such as politics, the media, bureaucracy and the law.

Worked example

Consider the analysis of how the invitation to a child's birthday party below complies with overt norms.



1 Dear Jasper,

2 Bea is so excited to invite you to her 5th birthday celebration
3 on August 19th at 12 pm at Galactic Kidz Adventure Play.
4 It would mean so much to us if you could join us for an
5 afternoon of fun, laughter and memories.

6 Come dressed as your favourite superhero or rockstar!

7 Please RSVP 11th August.

8 Jayne & Alan

The invitation to Bea's birthday party complies to expectations of overt norms in Australian society. The invitation opens in line 1 with a standard term of address, 'Dear', followed by the name of the invitee, 'Jasper', and includes information about the location, time and date in the declarative in lines 2 and 3, conforming with the conventions of an invitation. The use of nouns in the 'party' semantic domain, such as 'celebration' (line 2), 'fun',

Uses metalanguage to indicate how conventions are being adhered to.

> 'laughter' and 'memories' (line 5) demonstrates excitement, conforming to the broader societal expectations of using a fun and happy tone when discussing a child's birthday. The declarative 'It would mean so much to us if you could join us ...' in lines 4–5 conveys the emotional significance of Jasper's attendance. Here Jayne and Alan use positive politeness to ensure attendees feel comfortable and included in the festivities: an expectation of invitees in the context of a party.

Uses specificity when referring to participants in the text (i.e. their names, not generic terms like 'reader' and 'author').

Explains how different language features comply with overt norms in relation to the text and its context.

Covert norms

Covert norms are linguistic behaviours and patterns that are not openly valued in mainstream settings or might not align with what is traditionally considered 'standard' in broader society, but are instead valued and hold significance within specific communities or social groups.

Covert norms can encompass various linguistic features. They may require specific use of slang or jargon that is unique to a particular community – an example would be Australian Rules Football fans referring to a catch as a 'speccie'. The use of language varieties that are not standardised among the majority – such as migrant ethnolects and AAEs – can also constitute covert norms. Using linguistic forms that align with covert norms can also be a way for individuals to express affiliation with a particular group. Expectations for grammar and text types can be more flexible for language that conforms to covert norms compared to overt norms; the priority is that the language features being used are positively valued by the relevant community.

Scan the code or click here to watch Simon Taylor discussing using an ethnolect that he learned from his classmates at school to gain covert prestige when negotiating car repairs. In this way, a speaker can use language to indicate membership of a particular community. (Please note that this video contains swearing.)

Covert prestige refers to the social value or status attached to linguistic forms that are specific to a particular group or community. These forms might be stigmatised in broader society but within a specific community they signal in-group membership, social belonging and solidarity.

Covert prestige is often linked to group identity, and is often gained by the use of vernacular that is acceptable in a particular context, especially when it expresses solidarity and group membership and belonging. It can also be a mode of resistance against mainstream norms, especially if a community feels marginalised or oppressed.

Worked example

Two skateboarders, Cara and Lee, discuss the events at a local skateboard park. Consider the analysis of covert norms in the transcript of their conversation.

1	Cara:	<F Oi Lee F>
2		Did you s=ee that guy drop-in on me?
3	Lee:	Yeah, what a snake/
4		He couldn't even land a kickflip but I just saw him heading up round the quarter-pipe\
5	Cara:	He's going to stack it for sure\
6	Lee:	Anyway (.) I'm wrecked (..) sesh <A same time tomorrow? A>
7	Cara:	Yeah (.) sounds good.

Cara and Lee use slang that is specific to skateboarding, such as 'drop-in' (line 2) and 'sesh' (line 6) to demonstrate their in-group status with each other, as people who are fans of the activity. Similarly, they use phrases from the semantic domain of skateboarding, such as 'land a kickflip' and 'quarter-pipe' (line 4), which harnesses their shared knowledge of the sport to maintain efficiency in the conversation. This also contributes to Cara and Lee's sense of covert prestige as, to outside observers or those who do not participate in skateboarding, these terms could be nonsensical or confusing. Therefore, their adherence to covert norms demonstrates their shared understanding of skateboarding and allows them to communicate about the events at the skate park in a specific and efficient manner.

Identifies relevant examples using appropriate metalanguage.

Provides secondary analysis demonstrating sophisticated knowledge of the topic.

Develop your understanding 16.2

1 Consider your use of language when you are communicating with your friends, your online communities and your family. Construct a table comparing the different forms of language you use in these settings, focusing on detecting the overt norms and covert norms you comply with.

2 Respond to the essay prompt below, using the data you have collected. Write at least one paragraph discussing covert norms and at least one paragraph discussing overt norms.

'Our use of language is shaped more by who we are communicating with than the topic we are discussing.'

Discuss, using at least two examples with appropriate metalanguage in each paragraph of your response.

Code switching

Code switching occurs when language users alternate between two or more different languages during a single conversation or text. Code switching can happen for a variety of reasons, both social and linguistic, with the social reasons being the focus of Year 12 English Language.

Code switching reinforces group membership and belonging in a number of ways.

- It can **reinforce shared cultural background**. Speakers can evoke specific cultural references, jokes or memories that resonate with their listeners, reinforcing a sense of shared history and belonging.
- A speaker might code-switch to **convey affection, intimacy or other emotions** that feel more authentic or nuanced in one language than in another. This can **reinforce close bonds and a sense of belonging** among speakers.
- In some contexts, especially where a particular language is marginalised, code switching can be **an act of resistance**. By choosing to use a marginalised language in specific contexts, speakers assert their identity and challenge dominant linguistic norms, **fostering a sense of empowerment and belonging** in their community.

The ability to code-switch and demonstrate group belonging to a particular language background can convey covert prestige among those with a shared language background.

Worked example

Consider Mila, Dina and Sarah's conversation. The analysis of its tenor is based on Mila's code switching.

1	Mila:	Are you heading off?
2	Dina:	I better (.) it's a bit of a drive home\
3	Mila:	Of course/
4		<F Sarah F> (..) give *Teta*[1] Dina a hug (.) she's about to leave/
5	Sarah:	By=e *Teta*/
6	Dina:	<F Bye guys F>

[1] ***Teta***: Aunty (in Macedonian)

Mila, Dina and Sarah's conversation demonstrates a close tenor due to Mila's use of Macedonian when code-switching. Mila uses the Macedonian noun '*Teta*' (line 4), instead of the English 'Aunty', to refer to Dina when talking to Sarah. Mila's assumption that both Dina and Sarah will understand her switch between Macedonian and English demonstrates their close family relationship and the shared cultural background between them.

Refers to language examples using metalanguage.

Explains the social reason for the use of code switching in the context of the text.

Develop your understanding 16.3

Collect examples of code switching from your own communities, from Australian television shows, from Australian social media accounts or a combination of all three. Use the following table to document your examples. An example has been completed for you.

Example	Context	Metalanguage	Purpose
I went to the shops but the Tim Tams sudah habis lah. So I must buy other thing, lor, to makan.	*Conversation with Singaporean–Australian mother.*	*sudah: adverb meaning 'already'* *habis: adjective meaning 'run out / finished'* *lah: discourse particle, can be used in situations where there is familiarity between participants* *lor: discourse particle to indicate resignation* *makan: verb meaning 'eat'*	*Used to reinforce shared cultural background and demonstrate familiarity between participants.*

CHAPTER
17

Analysing language and identity

During your study of English Language, you can be assessed through any one or a combination of the following tasks: a folio of annotated texts, an essay, an investigative report, an analytical commentary or short-answer questions. This chapter includes one written text and provides practice for each task, with a focus on Unit 4, Area of Study 2: Individual and group identities.

Refer to Chapter 18 on pages 219–43 to learn how to approach each of these tasks.

Essay topics

Write an essay that responds to one of the following questions. Refer to the stimulus material provided.

Question 1

Stimulus A

'Social media allows its users to construct a preferred online identity that may not match with reality.'

Article about the impact of social media

Stimulus B

'Media professionals have an important role to play in reducing community use of outdated language relating to mental illness.

Research shows the repeated publishing of outdated or out of context terms relating to mental illness may increase stigma for those with lived experience, trivialise the issue or discourage people from seeking help when they need it.'

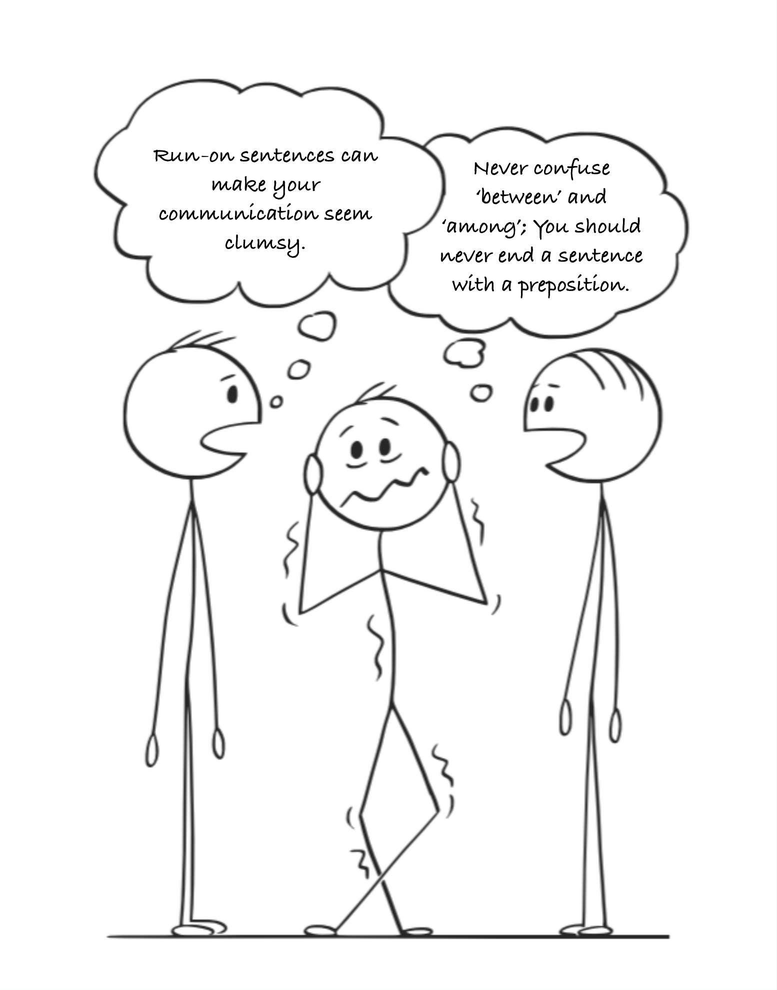
'Use of outdated language relating to mental illness', *Everymind*, <https://mindframe.org.au>, 2 Feb 2022

Stimulus C

‘The truth is many bosses allow gobbledygook to seep from their mouths and into the workplace to … obscure their ineptness. They make use of a fully stocked arsenal of colourful language to appear competent, professional, on top of their game and in control of any workplace situation.’

Gary Martin, ‘How corporate jargon is poisoning our workplaces’, *The West Australian*, <https://www.thewest.com.au>, 5 January 2023

Stimulus D


Run-on sentences can make your communication seem clumsy.
Never confuse ‘between’ and ‘among’; You should never end a sentence with a preposition.

Adapted from Shutterstock image

‘Whether we like it or not, our language can reveal a great deal about who we are.’

Discuss, referring to at least two subsystems in your response.

Question 2

Stimulus A

‘Australians tend to be fairly informal in their everyday interactions and it is common practice to call someone by their first name only. You can address someone by their title and their family name, but this is considered unnecessary and overly formal for most situations. People do, however, tend to be more formal in business and professional situations.’

Andrea Riddell, ‘Australian culture, values and customs’, *Career FAQs*, <www.careerfaqs.com.au>, 13 October 2011

Stimulus B

‘Anyone who is regularly called on to justify catastrophic failures, be it in the corporate or political world, will have to … fall back on euphemism, or what George Orwell called phrases intended to “name things without calling up mental pictures of them”.’

Charlie Lewis, ‘“Rapid unscheduled disassembly”: a potted history of great political euphemisms’, *Crikey*, <www.crikey.com.au>, 24 April 2023

Stimulus C

‘… there are different forms and nuances of power that are exerted by all people in everyday situations such as conversations with friends, lessons at schools, and reading the newspaper or engaging in social media. Importantly, power in language is both ubiquitous and sometimes hardly perceptible.’

Elias Telser, ‘How do language and power interact?’, *Eurac Research*, <www.eurac.edu>, 20 April 2023

Stimulus D

‘Fear of authority can decrease the effectiveness of communication. Emotional experiences such as fear and anxiety elicit avoidance behavior rather than approach behavior.’

Yuwan Dai, Hao Li, Wenting Xie, and Tianyi Deng, ‘Power distance belief and workplace communication: The mediating role of fear of authority’, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 5: 2932, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052932>, 2022

‘Language can be used in a number of ways to assert power and authority.’

Discuss, referring to at least two subsystems in your response.

Investigative report

Investigate the use of sociolects within a specific social group. Formulate a research question such as ‘What do sociolects reveal about group and individual identities?’ Source data by attending gatherings of a local social group of your choice. With permission, observe, take notes and/or record conversations and interactions. Document the use of specific lexical terms, discourse patterns or other linguistic features that are characteristic of the sociolect.

Analyse the linguistic elements of the interactions. What conclusions can you draw, based on your analysis? Construct a written report or equivalent presentation. Include an introduction, methodology, findings, analysis and conclusion.

Annotating texts

Annotate the language features of the text on page 218, considering how they relate to individual and group identities.

Short-answer questions

Refer to the text on page 218 and answer the following questions.

1. Who seems to have the most authority in the cafe? Justify your answer, using one example with appropriate metalanguage. (2 marks)
2. How does the author use specific lexical choices to convey cultural identity and heritage? Include two examples with appropriate metalanguage. (3 marks)
3. Analyse the use of pronouns in the text. What can you infer about gender identities and inclusivity from these choices? Include three examples in your response, with appropriate metalanguage. (4 marks)
4. Discuss how the identities of Lila, Alex and Casey have been represented in the text by the author. Use examples with appropriate metalanguage as part of your discussion. (5 marks)

Analytical commentary

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of the text on page 218. Use appropriate metalanguage and include line numbers in your response. In your response, consider:

- social and personal variation (sociolects and idiolects) in language
- representations of individual and group identities
- the ways in which the language of individuals and the language of groups are shaped by social expectations and community attitudes
- code switching as a means of demonstrating group membership and belonging.

Scan the code or click here to view answers to the short-answer questions and the analytical commentary.

Written text

Read the following musings about cafe culture, written by a Melburnian author originally from Singapore.

In the cafe corner, I'm lost in thought, tracing patterns on my *batik*[1] notebook, a gift from my mother. The coffee aroma brings memories of her *nyonya kueh*[2] and ancestral tales. Lines on my face show time's passage, making me a bridge between past and present.

Every morning, there's a delightful ballet that unfolds at my local cafe. It begins with the barista, a young woman named Lila, offering a knowing nod to Jordan as she makes his triple-shot macchiato. Then there's Taylor, fresh from some invigorating morning activity, who opts for a decaf almond latte with a sprinkle of cinnamon. He claims that regular milk is so last season, and who can argue with that?

Alex, with their vintage music collection, insists on a flat white, but only if the milk is steamed to a precise 65°C. A degree more, and it's practically a different drink! They've been trying to educate everyone on the nuances of coffee temperatures, but most just nod and smile, not wanting to get into a heated debate so early in the morning.

The showstopper is when Casey enters the scene. His way of ordering is an art form. He weighs in on the vast universe of coffee choices. Espresso or cappuccino? Soy or oat milk? Sugar or no sugar? The suspense is tangible. Lila, ever patient, waits. And just when you think a decision is imminent, Casey surprises all: 'You know what? I'm in the mood for tea today.'

[1] ***batik***: a particular style of fabric dyeing originating in Indonesia

[2] ***nyonya kueh***: bite-sized cakes or sweets particular to Peranakan Chinese culture in Malaysia

CHAPTER

18

Assessment in Year 12 English Language

There are five major forms of assessment in Year 12 English Language, which can be used across any of the areas of study in Units 3 and 4: a folio of annotated texts, short-answer questions, an analytical commentary, an investigative report and an essay. Your assessment can take the form of any one or a combination of these tasks, and it may be written, oral or multimodal. Your teacher will determine the final requirements of your assessment task.

This chapter will provide a broad overview of the main assessment types and outline some useful methods of approaching these tasks with accompanying sample high-level, annotated student responses. By reading through the advice, techniques and examples offered in this chapter, you will learn new ways to develop your skills in linguistic analysis, reading comprehension and writing, as well as gain insight in how you can achieve your best throughout the course.

Folio of annotated texts

To complete an annotated folio, you will need to collect a range of texts that demonstrate language use within a specific focus area. You will then need to annotate each individual text for its language features and analyse how those language features contribute to the focus area.

How to approach the folio of annotated texts

You should aim to select and annotate a range of text types and forms that allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the key knowledge and the key skills for the area of study being assessed. The following table lists some common text types that could be used for a folio, depending upon the area of study for the assessment. You can use this table as a reference for ideas when selecting your texts.

Area of study	Possible text types
Unit 3, Area of Study 1: Informality	personal exchanges (messaging, in-person chats) interviews (broadcast or written) advertisements and marketing campaigns newspaper reports and opinion pieces social media posts or videos
Unit 3, Area of Study 2: Formality	public documents such as government media releases interviews (broadcast or written) speeches and spoken public exchanges advertisements and marketing campaigns manuals and technical documents newspaper reports and opinion pieces
Unit 4, Area of Study 1: Language variation in Australian society	personal exchanges interviews (broadcast or written) speeches and spoken public exchanges advertisements and marketing campaigns newspaper reports and opinion pieces social media posts and videos
Unit 4, Area of Study 2: Individual and group identities	personal exchanges interviews (broadcast or written) speeches and spoken public exchanges advertisements and marketing campaigns newspaper reports and opinion pieces social media posts and videos

Steps for annotating a text

1. Find an appropriate text and include it in your folio. This may involve adding it to a print journal or folder, or saving it to a document, depending on the form of your folio.
2. Provide source details with the text. Wherever possible, include the author, date of publication, where the text was found/published and a link if it is an online source.
3. Write contextual information and a brief summary of the text.
4. Identify relevant examples from the text and label them, identifying language features and using appropriate metalanguage.
5. Write an explanation that describes how the language examples function.

   OR

   Write an analysis that demonstrates your understanding of the key knowledge related to the area of study you are being assessed on.

Sample annotated text

The following is an example of one annotated text that could be used as part of a folio for Unit 3, Area of Study 1: Informality.

Source details

The Oodie website, accessed September 2023.

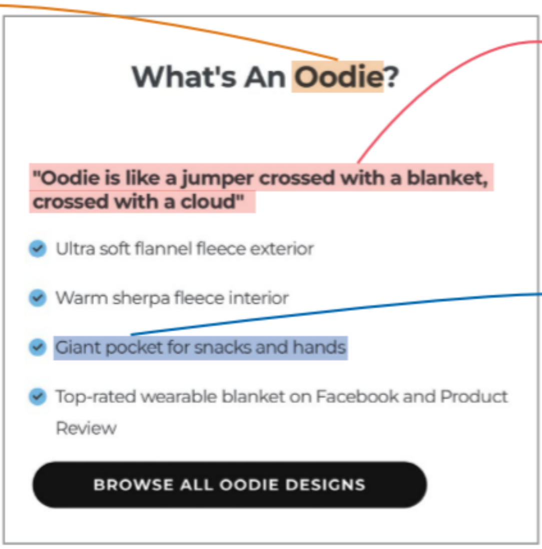
https://theoodie.com/

Context and brief summary

The Oodie is an oversized, wearable blanket, often referred to as a 'blanket hoodie'. It is produced by an Australian-owned company. This garment combines the comfort of a warm blanket with the convenience and style of a hoodie. Often made with soft, luxurious materials, Oodies are designed for cosiness. The company has tapped into a growing trend towards comfort and relaxation in clothing, and its products have gained popularity for home use, especially during cold weather. It offers a variety of designs and patterns, allowing consumers to personalise their Oodies to match their style or interests. This excerpt from the website illustrates word formation processes and similes used for marketing. Through the use of informal language, the brand creatively emphasises the product's fun and whimsical nature, creating a connection that resonates with its customers.

Annotations for informal language features

'Oodie' appears to be a blend of 'oversized' and 'hoodie'. This new, informal word encapsulates the essential characteristics of the product, emphasising its large size and its hoodie-like appearance. The 'Oodie' blend is also specific to the brand, making the product name as memorable as possible for potential customers.



What's An Oodie?

"Oodie is like a jumper crossed with a blanket, crossed with a cloud"

- ✓ Ultra soft flannel fleece exterior
- ✓ Warm sherpa fleece interior
- ✓ Giant pocket for snacks and hands
- ✓ Top-rated wearable blanket on Facebook and Product Review

The simile helps customers to visualise the product's qualities by likening it to familiar objects and adds a touch of poetic flair to the marketing language. It's an informal and creative way to express the comfort, warmth and softness of the Oodie.

The informal hyperbole 'giant' exaggerates the size of the pocket, emphasising its importance as a valuable place for holding items. The hyperbole also draws the customer's attention to the pocket, which most 'blankets' do not have, encouraging the customer to see it as a unique and beneficial feature of the Oodie.

Short-answer questions

A short-answer question assessment typically consists of a written or spoken text, and a set of questions about the text that require individual responses. These questions often ask you to reflect on and analyse different language features within the text. They are designed to measure your understanding of the key knowledge and key skills in the Study Design.

How to approach the short-answer questions

There are many ways to approach a short-answer question assessment. Some students prefer to read the text *before* reading the questions so they can keep the text in mind as they consider the questions. Other students find it helpful to read the text *after* they've read the questions, so they can search for specific examples as they go. Regardless of your approach, it is important to read the text closely before responding to the short-answer questions, to ensure that your answers are relevant to the text.

A text is usually accompanied by a statement that describes the form of the text, publication details and any other background information that will assist your interpretation. When reading this statement, consider how the situational and cultural context might influence the register of the text, the functions of the text and the creator's purpose/s and intent/s. It is helpful to keep this in mind as you read and answer the questions.

Deconstructing questions

Before writing any answers, it is highly recommended that you deconstruct the questions. This will help you to ensure that your answers are detailed, relevant and include all the necessary information to receive full marks.

You can deconstruct questions by carrying out the following steps.

1. Identify the question's command term/s (verbs indicating the type of response you should give, such as 'identify', 'analyse', 'explain' or 'discuss').
2. Identify the key knowledge words (e.g. 'function', 'register', 'context' or other specific language features).
3. Identify any important instructions (e.g. include line numbers in your answers, or the number of examples that must be provided).
4. Pay close attention to the marks on offer as this will help you to determine the length and complexity of your response.

It can be useful to read all questions before you begin answering, to help you avoid repeating examples. You may notice that short-answer questions tend to build in complexity, from questions asking you to identify language features, through to questions requiring language analysis and more detailed explanations. The number of marks allocated for each question will help to indicate the level of detail that needs to go into your response.

Writing a response

Each answer that you give is a separate piece of writing. Ensure that every answer is concise and highly relevant to the question, and includes examples of language features from the text to support your argument. You should also use appropriate and accurate metalanguage to frame your responses, to demonstrate your understanding of the key knowledge for the area of study.

Sample transcript

The following is a transcript with accompanying short-answer questions that assess key knowledge across the areas of study in English Language.

Danny Katz writes a regular segment for the *Good Weekend*, a magazine published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers. Danny Katz responds to readers' requests for advice on a range of topics. This article was published on 22 July 2023.

Identifies the prominent, well-known author.

Notes the place of publication.

Signals some expectation for a formal register or skillful use of language.

Advice journalism sets up some expectations for informality in language use.

Provides date of publication.

Pushy pram-owners or reckless runners: Who has right of way on a footpath?

Many different pedestrians use the footpath, but who has right of way? As a runner, I feel I'm entitled to it, yet dog-owners and pram-pushers think otherwise.

R.R., St Ives, NSW

A: A footpath was once a place of honour. A place where the elderly and newborns got right of way, where the infirm … were given clear passage, where dog owners pulled their dogs to the side to let passers-by pass, the dogs tipping their hats and saying, "How dee doooooo." It was a golden age of civility and courtesy and talking dogs in hats. A footpath had rules: pedestrians kept to the left, always moved at a moderate pace and, if someone needed to overtake, they checked for oncoming traffic, indicated with their blinking eyes, then accelerated by manually shifting into a higher gear (pedestrians knew how to walk stick-shift back then, a skill sadly lost).

But what's happened to honour? A footpath is now a lawless frontier of carnage: a bloody battlefield where the only victors are the recklessly paced, the intimidatingly muscly, the phone down-headed and the hot-boddedly sexy who distract us for a moment and make us bump into bus-stop benches. Nobody keeps to their lanes; it's just a game of chicken. Right of way goes to whoever's coming at you with the most unwavering trajectory, forcing you to dive into shopfront doorways or leap off a kerb into oncoming traffic.

Tragically, that might be your answer. Whoever wants it most gets right of way: the zippy-legged joggers, the zombie-eyed device-starers, the obliviously romantic hand-holders, the hatless-dogged dog-walkers and the pushy-arsed parents driving wide-load prams with 18 wheels and a roo bar. The rest just have to creep along the edges, tiptoeing sideways.

Source: Danny Katz, https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/pushy-pram-owners-or-reckless-runners-who-has-right-of-way-on-a-footpath-20230602-p5ddic.html

Sample annotated short-answer questions and answers

Key for deconstructing questions	
pink key knowledge	**green** command term
yellow instructions	**orange** number of marks

1 **Identify one function of the text. (1 mark)**

The text has an emotive function, expressing Danny Katz's sarcastic disapproval of current footpath behaviours.

States the function.

Contextualises the function in relation to the topic Katz presents in the article.

1 mark awarded for accurate identification of function using accurate metalanguage.

2 **Using appropriate metalanguage, analyse the use of syntactic patterning in lines 5–7. (2 marks)**

In lines 5–7, Katz uses syntactic listing to effectively outline the different types of pedestrians and their respective courteous behaviours. This is evident in his description of respectful actions such as 'the elderly and newborns got right of way', 'the infirm ... were given clear passage', and 'dog owners pulled their dogs to the side to let passers-by pass' (lines 5–7). By listing these courteous behaviours one after the other, Katz highlights that these were common in the past, thereby heightening the contrast with the present chaotic state he describes later in the text.

States the type of syntactic patterning.

Explains the function of the listing.

Provides example with line numbers.

Explains more fully how the listing is used in the context of what it allows the writer to achieve.

1 mark awarded for accurate identification of the type of syntactic patterning and accurate example.
1 mark awarded for the explanation of its use.

3 **Identify two examples of deictic reference and explain how they contribute to cohesion. (3 marks)**

One example of a deictic reference in the text is the adverbial phrase 'back then' (line 11) as in 'pedestrians knew how to walk stick-shift back then'. This reference provides a sense of progression from a time in the past, when pedestrians had different manners. When combined with the adverb 'now' (line 13), a deictic reference to the present time, this indicates that the text is organised chronologically. The use of deictic reference contributes to cohesion by creating a temporal link between different parts of the text.

Uses metalanguage to frame the examples.

Includes examples with line numbers.

Provides detailed explanations of how the examples function in contributing to cohesion.

2 marks awarded for an accurate identification of two deictic references.
1 mark awarded for the explanation of how the deictic reference contributes to cohesion.

4 **Analyse two different examples of semantic patterning in the text. Refer to line numbers in your response. (4 marks)**

Katz employs metaphor when he refers to the footpath as 'a lawless frontier of carnage' (line 13). Here, he isn't implying that the footpath is literally a region devoid of governance or a scene of bloody violence; rather, he uses the metaphor to symbolically depict the chaos and lack of decorum he perceives in contemporary pedestrian behaviour. The metaphor accentuates the perceived disregard for any form of order or rule-following on the footpath and contributes to the overall vivid imagery of the piece.

Lexical ambiguity is observed when Katz states, 'the rest just have to creep along the edges, tiptoeing sideways' (line 22). In this instance, 'edges' could be interpreted as the literal edge of the footpath or metaphorically as the periphery of a socially acceptable space or behaviour. Consequently, the lexical ambiguity encourages readers to engage more deeply with the text as they interpret the layered meanings.

Identifies the types of semantic patterning.

Includes examples with line numbers.

Explains the implied meanings of the patterns in the context of the text.

Explains the roles the patterns play in the text, and the effects they have on the audience.

2 marks awarded for accurate identification of two different semantic patterns with accurate examples.
2 marks awarded for analysis that explains how the semantic patterns function in the text.

5 **Analyse how the register of the text works to support tenor and authorial intent. Refer to specific examples and line numbers in your response. (5 marks)**

The register of the text is both formal and informal, employing a mixture of journalistic language and a conversational, colloquial style that supports the tenor and authorial intent of Katz, who aims at both provoking thought and eliciting humour. The formal register is evident in Katz's use of complex lexical choices and sentence structures. For instance, the noun phrases 'a place of honour' (line 5), 'a golden age of civility and courtesy' (lines 7–8), and 'a lawless frontier of carnage' (line 13) demonstrate Katz's skilful and effective use of language, contributing to a formal, journalistic style. These noun phrases, in particular, serve to impart gravity to Katz's observations and commentary, thereby supporting his intent to shed light on a significant issue concerning pedestrian rights and etiquette.

On the other hand, the informal register surfaces in Katz's use of colloquialisms, humour and hyperbolic expressions. The phrase 'the intimidatingly muscly, the phone down-headed and the hot-boddedly sexy' (lines 14–15), uses compounding to create a unique

Identifies register, along with connection between the register, tenor and authorial intent of the work.

Directs analysis towards formal register.

Uses metalanguage to frame examples.

Includes examples with line numbers.

Describes the effect of the examples in contributing to the register and style of language.

Explains how the examples contribute to authorial intent.

Uses a transitional phrase to shift the discussion into an analysis of the informal register.

Identifies informal register while stating the informal language features that work to support this.

description that is playful and informal, most notably in the adjective 'hot-boddedly' (line 15). 'The pushy-arsed parents driving wide-load prams ...' (line 21) contains swearing that also brings informality to the register at this point in the text. This language injects humour and relatability into the discourse while engaging the reader.

The mix of formal and informal register supports the close tenor of the text, which alternates between a societal critique and lighthearted satire. Evident in the declarative sentence 'pedestrians knew how to walk stick-shift back then' (line 11), Katz implies that pedestrians lack the social etiquette that was observed in the past, while playfully mocking the idea that past generations were more skilled in simple activities like walking. The use of humour encourages a close tenor between Katz and the readers, and reinforces Katz's authorial intent of raising awareness and entertaining the audience.

Shifts into discussion of register and tenor.

Links tenor and authorial intent to examples and discussion.

The answer to this type of question is generally marked using a holistic or global marking approach that evaluates the response as an integrated whole, rather than dissecting it into individual parts. The response is assessed on whether it demonstrates a clear grasp of key knowledge such as register, tenor and authorial intent. The ability to provide and effectively interpret relevant evidence from the text, specifically through examples and line references, is another crucial component. Overall, the assessor will consider the level of insight and understanding shown in the analysis of how the register supports the tenor and authorial intent. The response should also be well organised, logically structured and easily comprehensible. The use of language is assessed based on clarity and effectiveness, as well as appropriate metalanguage.

Sample marking scheme for 5-mark questions

Please note that the following marking scheme is a sample only. Your teacher may develop one that is different from this.

High **(4–5 marks)**	Highly accurate response containing clear and relevant analysis. Well supported with accurate examples framed using appropriate metalanguage. Ideas are logically presented using clear and controlled language.
Medium **(2–3 marks)**	Mostly accurate response containing relevant analysis. Generally supported with some accurate examples framed using appropriate metalanguage. Ideas are logically presented using mostly clear language.
Low **(1 mark)**	Partially accurate response. Mostly descriptive with few examples. Some use of metalanguage but not always accurate.

Analytical commentary

An analytical commentary is a written piece that analyses the salient language features of a spoken or written text. An analytical commentary assessment will typically consist of a written or spoken text for analysis, a set of instructions and space to write your response.

Tip

Salient features in a spoken or written text are the most obvious ones – those that are common or typical for the form of text, or most significant in helping the author's purpose. Completing regular practice on a range of both spoken and written text types will help you to become confident when identifying salient features.

How to approach the analytical commentary

An analytical commentary is a flexible form of writing, typically including body paragraphs and an optional introduction. Year 12 English Language students should be adaptable and respond to the text at hand when deciding on a preferred structural approach for their analytical commentary.

Understanding the instructions

While the instructions for an analytical commentary may vary, they articulate the requirements for the task. The key knowledge you are expected to cover in your response is usually listed or adapted in relation to the text, and will depend on the unit and area of study you are being assessed on.

Steps for writing an analytical commentary

1. Read the instructions carefully, making note of any important directions.
2. Read through the text, identifying the influences on language (key knowledge) you need to link to, which may include:
   - functions
   - intents and purposes
   - register
   - tenor
   - audience
   - context.

   You can use the mnemonic 'FIRTAC' to help you remember these.
3. Annotate the important features in the text, labelling examples with metalanguage.
4. Identify which features will fit under the key knowledge you need to explore.
5. Construct a plan for how you will structure and sequence your paragraphs, such as approaching the text chronologically or based on your strongest evidence.

The following pages include a text with accompanying instructions, a plan and a sample analytical commentary.

Sample annotated text

In the following transcript, Clifford (C) phones EnergyHome and speaks with customer service representative Enzo (E) to complain about a recent bill.

See page 27 for a list of transcription symbols and their meaning.

E: Good afternoon, (.) you have phoned EnergyHome/
you are speaking with Enzo\
How can I assist you?
C: Look (.) I'm not happy/
I just received my gas bill/
I (..) I can't believe the amount/
It is <L ridiculous L> and from what I can see/ (.)
It looks like you have charged me triple the amount,
<A I mean it's absolutely ludicrous/ A>
E: Okay/ (.) do you have an account number that I can look up in our
system?
It's usually located on the <L top right-hand side L> of the bill\
C: Hang on a sec/
I'm (..) I'm just looking\
Yep. Got it, it's <A 427896BT. A>
E: Sorry (.) can you repeat that? You went a bit too quickly\
C: Oh for crying out loud <L 4 (..) 2 (..) 7 (..) 8 (..) 9 (..) 6 (..) B (..) T (..) L>
E: Thank you for that/
Just getting your account up on screen now/
C: Look (.) I don't mean to be rude but I'm at work,
and I don't have a lot of time (.) but now I'm wasting my day,
trying to find out why I'm being charged so much,
compared to what I'm usually charged/
E: I understand (.) thank you for your patience,
okay can I please have your full name to verify your account?
C: Clifford Anderson.
E: Okay (.) Mr Anderson thank you.
Let's take a closer look and see what has happened.
Right (.) your bill indicates that you have been charged,
for three months' supply of gas/
C: Wait (.) what? Three months?

Formal formulaic greeting evidence of register. Conversation initiation signals topic management.

Interrogative maintains formality and sets a professional tone. Evidence of turn-taking strategy.

Slow tempo and stress emphasises frustration and disbelief.

Increased tempo and stress intensifies emotions and level of frustration.

Interrogative containing language from a semantic domain of accounting.

Shift to an informal register through an idiom.

Non-fluency features in the form of pauses and slow tempo ensure the information is comprehended.

Interjection adds to the informal register and signals a shift in tenor from professional to emotively driven.

Positive politeness shows intent and purpose in showing empathy.

E: That's correct sir (.) your account indicates that it has defaulted to
quarterly billing/
C: Well that's bloody ridiculous because I always received my bills
monthly\
E: I can see that sir (..) but that was based on your old plan,
<A which finished three months ago, A> all new plans default to
quarterly [billing].
C: [I didn't] get told/
There was <L no warning, no information. L>
E: I'm sorry sir but the information is included in the terms and
conditions, that were posted to you in January\
C: And who has time to read those?
E: Sir (.) would you like to transfer you to our <L financial support
department L>?
C: What's that? You think I can't pay my bill?
E: No sir (.) not at all, I thought maybe you could gain more information
[from]
C: [Listen] to me,
I don't need <L more information L> or any help making a payment/
I want to make a complaint.
E: I'm sorry to hear that sir.
I will transfer your call now to our complaints department/
C: The fact that you have an entire department for complaints says it all\
E: Thank you for your call sir.
Please hold the line while I transfer your call.

Overlapping speech reflects frustration and dissatisfaction.

Negative politeness shows intent and purpose in respecting distance and autonomy.

Overlapping speech signals Clifford's attempt to dominate the conversation. Signals contrast in speakers' intents and purposes.

Sample annotated instructions

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of the text on pages 228–9. Use appropriate metalanguage and include line numbers in your response. In your response, consider:

- the use of formal language for various purposes and intents
- the major functions that formal language serves when used in a given context

Use the purpose and intents listed in the Study Design and, since this is a formal language analytical commentary, focus on those listed under formal language (see Chapter 8).

Determine whether the formal text serves referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalinguistic and/or poetic functions (see Chapter 8).

- the influence of register, tenor and audience in a formal text
- the features of formal speech
- the relationship between context and features of language in a formal spoken text
- features of spoken discourse in creating a formal text
- discourse strategies and the ways in which cooperation is achieved in a formal spoken text.

Refer to at least two subsystems in your analysis.

Address these in relation to the content, considering how formal language in this case connects with tenor and audience (see Chapter 2).

Focus especially on those features given in the Study Design (see Chapter 7). However, do not limit yourself just to these.

Do not fixate on trying to cover all features of context, but focus on those most important for the text you are analysing, especially as they pertain to formal language (see Chapter 7).

Consider discourse features relevant to formal texts (see Chapter 9).

Consider discourse strategies for encouraging cooperation in formal texts (see Chapter 9).

Remember that this is a **minimum**, not a **maximum**, but try to explore your points well rather than trying to flood your analysis with rushed or haphazard connections to the subsystems.

Sample plan

The following is a sample plan for an analytical commentary on the transcript of speech, based on the sample instructions.

Introduction	Brief description of the text. Identification of the influences on language: functions, intents and purposes, register, tenor, audience and context (decide on the most appropriate order as you see fit).
Body paragraphs	Analysis of register, examining formal language features. Analysis of shift in register, examining informal language features and explaining the effect on tenor. Analysis of positive and negative politeness strategies. Analysis of most salient features of spoken discourse. Analysis of overlapping speech with explanation of varying intents and purposes. Analysis of examples of topic management and turn-taking strategies.

While an introduction is optional, it can help orient your writing. There is no need to write a conclusion for an analytical commentary.

Sample annotated analytical commentary

The following sample analytical commentary on the transcript on pages 228–9 is over 900 words, which is at the upper end of student responses. Your teacher may not require a response of this length.

In the provided transcript, an exchange unfolds between Clifford Anderson, a customer, and Enzo, a representative of EnergyHome, concerning a dispute about a gas bill. Given the context of a customer complaint, this dialogue serves a conative and emotive function from the perspective of Clifford as he wants action taken in response to a bill he has received. Enzo primarily adopts a formal register to professionally address Clifford's concerns and work towards a satisfactory resolution. However, there are instances where more informal language is utilised, introducing a personal touch to the conversation, and empathising with Clifford's palpable frustration and urgency. The tenor of the dialogue, governed by the participants' roles and the power dynamics at play, shifts between formality and emotional expressiveness, with an undertone of urgency stemming from Clifford's predicament. This intricate interplay of language reflects the main purposes of the conversation – to resolve the problem at hand, manage customer relations effectively and navigate the emotional complexity inherent in this specific complaint situation.

Introduces the participants (audience) in the conversational exchange, their roles, the reason for the conversation, and contextual information relating to the text.

Identifies two functions of the text.

Identifies the register adopted by one of the participants, and a shift in the register, providing reasons why the different registers are used.

Identifies and describes the tenor.

Identifies purposes and intents.

Enzo opens the conversation with a formal, formulaic greeting, 'Good afternoon, you have phoned EnergyHome you are speaking with Enzo' (lines 1–2), setting a professional tone, which is followed by the interrogative 'How can I assist you?' (line 3). This formality is maintained as Enzo proceeds to ask for Clifford's 'account number' (line 10), using procedural language from a semantic domain of accounting, thus reinforcing to Clifford that this specific information is necessary for progressing the call.

Analyses examples relating to register, using appropriate metalanguage.

A shift towards informality occurs when Clifford uses the idiom 'Hang on a sec' (line 13), asking Enzo to wait while he looks for his account information. Additionally, Clifford's use of the interjection, 'Oh for crying out loud' (line 17) conveys his exasperation, changing the formality of the register at this point in the conversation to an informal one. This also subtly adjusts the tenor from a professional business interaction to a more emotionally expressive dialogue, highlighting Clifford's frustration and conveying his heightened sense of urgency to the customer service representative.

Extends analysis to discuss a subtle shift in tenor.

Throughout the conversation, Enzo employs both positive and negative politeness strategies. He uses language that suggests empathy and understanding, creating a sense of camaraderie or shared experience with Clifford. The declarative, 'I understand' (line 24), acknowledges Clifford's frustration and expresses concern for his feelings. This instance of positive politeness helps to lessen the gap between Enzo and Clifford, making the conversation more personable and empathetic. Enzo also displays negative politeness by respecting Clifford's need for distance and autonomy. Enzo uses formal apologetic language when he says, 'I'm sorry sir' (line 41), thereby showing respect by acknowledging the imposition that the situation might be causing Clifford.

Uses topic sentences to indicate the topics being discussed.

Analyses the functions of the politeness strategies, and explains the intents.

The conversation includes various features of spoken discourse. Slower tempo along with stress on the adjective 'ridiculous' (line 7) is used by Clifford to emphasise his disbelief and frustration over the high gas bill. The stress also amplifies his dissatisfaction, painting a clear picture of the situation's absurdity, while also highlighting to Enzo his intent for a swift resolution. He further employs stress but with increased tempo on the declarative 'I mean it's absolutely ludicrous' (line 9) to signal his heightened emotional state. This rapid delivery intensifies his message, while similarly indicating his desire for quick action. Non-fluency features in the form of pauses can be seen throughout the discourse. For example, Clifford employs pauses between the numbers and letters making up his account number when he is asked to repeat this information, '4 (..) 2 (..) 7 (..) 8 (..) 9 (..) 6 (..) B (..) T (..)' (line 17). On this occasion, Clifford punctuates each number and letter with pauses to ensure that Enzo has ample time to enter the account number into the computer system, and to indicate he is unimpressed that Enzo didn't get the numbers the first time around.

Analyses examples of stress, tempo and non-fluency features, and explains their functions.

Instances of overlapping speech illustrate some tension between Enzo and Clifford and their differing intents. In the first instance, Enzo attempts to explain the billing issue to Clifford, declaring 'that was based on your old plan, which finished three months ago, all new plans default to quarterly billing' (lines 36–8). Clifford, however, overlaps Enzo with the utterance 'I didn't get told' (line 39), reflecting his frustration and dissatisfaction about not being informed of this change. This breakdown in smooth turn-taking indicates that Clifford is more interested in expressing his complaint than in listening to the reasons behind the billing issue. The tension escalates further in the second instance, when Enzo begins the utterance, 'No sir not at all, I thought maybe you could gain more information from' (lines 47–8), aiming to provide additional information to help resolve the issue. Clifford, again, overlaps Enzo with the imperative 'Listen to me' (line 49) to assert control over the conversation and demonstrate his need for immediate resolution. The overlaps in both instances highlight the contrast between Enzo's intention to clarify and build rapport, and Clifford's intention to voice his dissatisfaction and seek a swift solution to the problem at hand.

Analyses examples of overlapping speech, explaining the differing intents of the two participants.

As the customer service representative, Enzo is largely responsible for topic management. He initiates the conversation with a formal greeting, 'Good afternoon, you have phoned EnergyHome' (line 1) and steers it to a conclusion with a polite formulaic closing, 'Please hold the line while I transfer your call' (line 56). The dialogue also includes turn-taking strategies, signalled by interrogatives such as 'How can I assist you?' (line 3) and 'do you have an account number that I can look up in our system?' (lines 10–11). On these occasions, Enzo relinquishes the floor to Clifford so he can provide responses to the questions and promote cooperative speech; however, the topic of the call itself is dictated by Clifford.

Provides examples of how topic management is achieved.

Analyses examples of turn-taking strategies and explains their function.

Investigative report

An investigative report in VCE English Language is a detailed, systematic examination of a specific topic or issue relating to your coursework. It involves the collection, evaluation and analysis of linguistics data from various sources to arrive at a comprehensive understanding or conclusion.

The process of creating an investigative report helps you to develop and demonstrate research skills, critical thinking and analytical abilities. It will enable you to explore the complexities of language use in real-world contexts, enhancing your understanding of how language shapes and is shaped by society and culture.

How to approach the investigative report

The following steps provide a guideline on how you could approach an investigative report.

Step 1: Identify a topic

Choose a specific topic or issue that you are interested in and that is relevant to the area of study being assessed. The topic should be narrow enough to be manageable but broad enough to provide sufficient material for investigation, for example:

- Investigate the ways Australian companies use language to promote group identity in corporate mission/values statements.
- Investigate the various uses of informal language in social media posts.

Step 2: Conduct preliminary research

Gather initial information about your topic to understand its scope and relevance. This will help you refine your research question and identify potential sources that you can include in your report. You can look for information online, in books and through libraries.

Step 3: Formulate a research question

Based on your preliminary research, determine a clear and concise research question that your investigative report will aim to answer.

Step 4: Plan your research

Identify the types of data you will need to answer your research question and the methods you will use to collect this data. This could include:

- surveys: set questions provided for participants to answer
- interviews: question-and-answer interactions with a participant to get detailed data
- content analysis: an in-depth analysis of a specific text which shows language in use
- literature reviews: a methodical discussion which provides an overview and analysis of previous academic research on the topic.

Step 5: Collect data

Conduct your research according to your plan, research question and chosen research method.

Step 6: Analyse data

Evaluate the data you have collected to identify patterns, trends and any other insights.

Step 7: Interpret findings

Interpret your results in relation to your research question. This involves making sense of your data, drawing conclusions and explaining the significance of your findings.

Step 8: Write the report

Write your investigative report, presenting your research question, methodology, findings and conclusions in a clear and structured manner. Include subheadings for an introduction, methodology, findings, analysis and conclusion.

Step 9: Cite sources

Reference all sources of information used in your report, to acknowledge the work of others and avoid plagiarism. Follow the citation style recommended by your teacher.

Sample annotated investigative report

The report below investigates emojis and their covert meanings.

An investigation into the covert meanings of emojis across age groups

Introduction

Emojis carry hidden meanings that extend beyond their visual representation. This report aims to investigate the covert connotations of a selection of emojis, based on a survey conducted with 50 participants aged 17 to 50.

Methodology

A survey was distributed to 50 participants, aged 17 to 50, to understand their interpretation and usage of a specific set of emojis. The participants were divided into two age groups: 17–30 (n=25) and 31–50 (n=25). The emojis were selected from emojipedia.org, based on popularity. The participants were asked to provide their understanding of each emoji and the context in which they would use them.

Concise and specific title outlines key elements of the study.

Introduces the study, outlines the purpose and method, and presents the scope of the report.

Explains the methodology of the study, detailing the survey distribution process and the nature of questions posed to participants.

Findings

The following table summarises the findings for the two age groups, regarding the correct interpretation and usage of 10 emojis, which have been categorised thematically.

Theme	Emojis	Representing	Younger (17–30)	Older (31–50)
Health and wellness	🏃🏾‍♂️	physical fitness	99%	60%
	💆‍♀️	mental wellbeing	95%	60%
	🥗	healthy eating	99%	65%
Emotional expressions	😠	annoyance	85%	30%
	😈	feeling mischievous	80%	35%
	💓	range of emotions, from love to jealousy to sorrow, depending on the context	80%	35%
Symbolic meanings	🔥	attractiveness	80%	30%
	🦋	having a crush or falling in love (representing the feeling of butterflies in the stomach)	70%	25%
Cultural influences	🧿	warding off the evil eye	60%	20%
Negative connotations	🐍	betrayal or backstabbing	85%	30%

Presents a detailed breakdown of the results for the interpretation and usage of different emojis across age groups, thematically categorised into specific aspects including emotional expressions and symbolic meanings.

Analysis

For all categories, the ability to correctly identify the meanings of the emojis varies with age group. Young people are likely to spend more time communicating with the usage of contemporary emojis, and as such have greater awareness of their covert meanings. Since emojis are used in texting and online communication, they can function as code words that parents or older people are less likely to correctly interpret if trying to read over the shoulder of a younger person.

Interestingly, the highest levels of correct identification for both groups were emojis that represented physical fitness, mental wellbeing and healthy eating (99%, 95% and 99% for younger people, and 60%, 60% and 65% for older people respectively). The importance of these

Analyses the results in terms of emoji usage and interpretations, cultural and social factors, and the communication patterns of different age groups. Significant differences between age groups and the reasons behind these differences are also discussed.

concepts varied, reflecting generational attitudes towards health, exercise and dietary habits. Younger participants may be more attuned to trends in wellness and self-care, which is reflected in a higher percentage of correct identification of these emojis, while older participants tended to connect them with traditional ideas of fitness and health. This theme highlights generational differences in understanding wellness in our society, specifically how it is depicted and communicated through emojis.

The lowest levels of correct identification (60% and 20%) reflected the same generational divide when referencing the warding off of the evil eye. This shows that cultural heritage still plays an important role in whether coherence is achieved.

The greatest differences (85% versus 30%) occurred for emojis referring to particular negative emotions: annoyance and feelings of betrayal. This could speak to the fact that the in-group of young people guards these meanings, or that older participants might focus on other denotations that they can attach from their generational knowledge and norms. For example, for many older participants the snake carried connotations of the Adam and Eve creation story, and so represented temptation or evil in this context.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that emojis carry a range of covert meanings, often influenced by cultural, social and contextual factors. Age plays a significant role in emoji interpretations, with younger individuals more likely to understand the covert meanings of emojis. Older individuals, on the other hand, often misinterpret these meanings, which can lead to miscommunication.

Summarises the main findings of the report, emphasising the influence of age on emoji interpretations.

Bibliography

https://emojipedia.org/

Provides list of references, sources, studies and articles that were used to inform the investigation.

Essay

An English Language essay is an expository (informative) essay, written in response to a set topic and stimulus material. It is usually around 700–900 words in length, although this will vary depending on the time allocated and the marks available.

The essay topic is the most important component of an English Language essay and should be your central focus during both the planning and writing stages. Essay topics are often presented in the form of statements or questions along with command terms, and will reflect key knowledge ideas relevant to the area of study being assessed.

Stimulus material is designed to provoke thought and guide discussion of the essay topic. This may include quotes, images, graphs or excerpts from texts. The stimulus material provided is a valuable resource, and while you should refer to at least one of the stimuli, it's not necessary to quote or utilise all of it, unless specifically instructed. You should be selective, incorporating only the portions that are relevant to the ideas you're exploring and that bolster your evidence.

Tip

Indicate the use of stimulus material in your essay response. This could be by adding the respective stimulus number in brackets following a direct quotation of or reference to the material. This practice ensures that your engagement with the provided stimuli is visible and acknowledged in your discussion.

Be sure to carefully read all instructions that accompany the essay topic and stimulus material, as they will provide you with guidance on what to include in your essay. The following table outlines some of the command terms that are commonly used in VCE English Language, and their meanings.

Common essay topic/question command terms used in English Language

Explore/discuss

Investigate the topic in a comprehensive and detailed manner. This often involves looking at various aspects or dimensions of the topic, discussing different perspectives and presenting a balanced view. It is about delving into the topic to discover its depth.

Examine

Provide a thorough investigation into the topic, similar to 'explore/discuss.' However, it usually suggests a more precise focus, perhaps on specific features of language. Detailed scrutiny of the topic is expected, often looking for relationships, causes, effects or the relevance of particular aspects.

Analyse

Break down the topic into its component parts and explain how these parts relate to each other and to the whole. This often involves looking at the structure, patterns or processes within the topic, and interpreting or drawing conclusions based on these.

To what extent do you agree?

This command asks for an expression of agreement or disagreement with a given statement or argument. Providing reasons or evidence to support the viewpoint is needed, with possible consideration of alternative perspectives or counterarguments.

To what extent is this true in Australian society?

This question requires an evaluation of how far and in what ways the statement or argument applies in Australian society. Specific examples or contemporary evidence from Australia may be necessary. The depth and validity of the argument hinges on the knowledge of the relevant aspects of Australian society.

Tip

Be sure to read the essay question carefully, as some questions may be very specific about the scope of the essay. For example, when responding to the command phrase 'discuss when this is true in Australian society', any discussion of when the topic is *not* true is considered out of scope and should not be included in the essay.

How to approach the essay

The steps below provide a guideline on how you could approach an essay.

Step 1: Deconstruct the essay topic for understanding

Begin by thoroughly reading the essay question, topic or proposition statement. Identify the key words that signal specific themes and key knowledge ideas relevant to the area of study. Look closely at the essay topic command terms that indicate what is required.

Step 2: Analyse the stimulus material

Review all the provided stimuli. Make notes of important points and try to understand how each stimulus contributes to the essay topic. Pay attention to who the authors are, the context of their arguments and the perspectives they offer.

Step 3: Develop a viewpoint/contention

Formulate a clear and concise viewpoint, argument or contention that encapsulates your response to the essay topic. This should guide the direction of your essay.

Step 4: Brainstorm and organise ideas

Based on your understanding of the essay topic and the stimuli, brainstorm your ideas. Try to develop at least three strong points that you can elaborate on in your essay. Organise these points in a logical order that best supports your argument. Decide which piece/s of the stimulus material to include and where to use them.

Step 5: Plan the essay

The level of detail in a plan will depend on your experience and on how much writing time you have under assessment conditions. As you develop your skills, you may find you only need a basic dot-point plan. Irrespective of your confidence and skill level, taking time to construct a plan will help you to construct a thoughtful and relevant discussion.

Your plan should be similar to the following outline.

- Introduction: provide the context of the discussion, a main contention and indicate the main points that will be discussed in the body paragraphs
- Body paragraph 1: present the first/strongest point with relevant evidence
- Body paragraph 2: present the second/next strongest point with relevant evidence

- Body paragraph 3: present the third/least strong point with relevant evidence
- Body paragraph 4 (dependent on question): present a counterargument to your discussion, then argue against this to support your contention
- Conclusion: restate the contention and summarise the main points.

Tip

Anecdotal evidence is considered a legitimate form of evidence in an English Language essay because it provides a real-life example or personal experience that illustrates a broader concept or theory. It is especially effective when discussing subjective topics such as language and culture. However, this form of evidence should not dominate the essay. Aim for a variety of evidence from contemporary sources such as those outlined on page 220 for the folio of annotated texts: news reports, advertisements, social media posts, etc.

Step 6: Write the essay

Follow your plan to write your essay. Use clear, concise and formal language. Remember to reference the stimulus material in your discussion to show your understanding of and engagement with the prompts. When providing evidence, use appropriate metalanguage. The following table outlines a suggested essay structure.

Introduction	Provide context for the topic. Briefly acknowledge the main points or ideas that will be discussed in the body paragraphs. Clearly state the contention. Aim to explicitly address key words from the essay topic.
Body paragraphs	Start each paragraph with a topic sentence that addresses key words in the essay topic. Clarify and elaborate on the main point through two or three explanatory or analytical sentences. Provide evidence that has been framed with appropriate metalanguage to support the point (contemporary/up-to-date examples). Analyse the evidence by explaining its relevance to the main point and essay topic. Construct a concluding sentence that summarises the point while relating it back to the contention.
Conclusion	Restate the contention. Summarise the main points. Provide a final thought on the topic or suggest implications.

Step 7: Revise and edit

After writing, take the time to revise and edit your essay. Look for any grammatical errors, unclear arguments or weak points. Make sure your arguments flow logically and the essay reads well overall. Do keep in mind that assessment tasks such as an essay are written under timed conditions. Therefore, work swiftly during the revision and editing process.

Sample annotated instructions

Write an essay that responds to the following essay question. Refer to the stimulus material provided.

Stimulus A

'Correctness, precision, purity, elegance are the qualities of the perceived standard. It is the measure of excellence – the 'benchmark', if you like, against which all other varieties of the language are gauged.'

Kate Burridge, 'Proper English: Rhetoric or reality', *English Australia Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.489199844018648>, 2004, p. 9

Suggests that SAE is often perceived as the benchmark for linguistic excellence, potentially influencing its prestige.

Stimulus B

'Australian English has evolved from a mixture of sources, beginning mainly with the dialects spoken by colonists arriving from south-eastern England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales towards the end of the 18th century. Since then, there have been influences from Indigenous languages and from many different migrant languages, in addition to natural processes of language change.'

'Englishes in Australia: History', The Linguistics Roadshow, <https://lingroadshow.com>, 2022

The rich diversity and evolutionary nature of Australian Englishes supports the argument that all language varieties should be afforded equal prestige.

Stimulus C

'These Aboriginal English features often show continuities with the traditional Aboriginal languages. In many subtle ways Aboriginal English is a powerful vehicle for the expression of Aboriginal identity.'

Diana Eades, 'Aboriginal English', Language varieties, <https://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/index.html>, 2012

AAEs are crucial to the expression of cultural identity among First Nations people, further supporting the call for equal prestige among language varieties.

Stimulus D

'The results of the latest national Census today reveal we're a fast changing, ever-expanding, culturally diverse nation.

Suggests that cultural diversity (including language diversity) is integral to Australia's national identity, further supporting the notion that all language varieties should hold equal prestige.

> In communities across the country, there is an increasing variety in terms of country of birth, languages spoken, whether people are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, and religious affiliation (or secular beliefs). The Census captures all of these characteristics and highlights the rich cultural diversity of Australian society.'
>
> 'Census reveals a fast changing, culturally diverse nation', Australian Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.abs.gov.au>, 27 July 2017

'All varieties of English spoken in Australia contribute to its cultural diversity and it is for this reason that all language varieties should be afforded the same levels of prestige.'

To what extent do you agree?

Discuss with reference to at least two subsystems of language.

A discussion is expected on the essay topic proposition, presenting clear agreement or disagreement supported by evidence.

Sample annotated essay

The following high-level sample annotated essay is over 900 words, which is at the upper end of student responses. Your teacher may not require a response of this length.

Australia, being a culturally diverse nation, is home to myriad English language varieties that each contribute to its rich cultural tapestry. From Standard Australian English (SAE), often seen as the benchmark of prestige, to Aboriginal Australian Englishes (AAEs) and migrant ethnolects influenced by diverse cultural backgrounds, each variety carries a distinct value in expressing and maintaining cultural identities. In line with the idea that every variant contributes to Australia's cultural diversity, each should be afforded equal prestige and respect, thereby mitigating any perception of inferiority.

Prestige is often attached to SAE as it has become synonymous with 'correctness, precision, purity, elegance' (Stimulus A). This is due to assumptions that SAE is attached to formality; however, this is not always the case. SAE provides an important vehicle for the expression of identity and national values, and should be given equal amounts of prestige as other varieties, rather than be afforded more prestige due to associations with intellect or social class. The importance of SAE in promoting national values can be observed on The Chaser's Instagram page. This satirical group

Directly addresses the essay topic by acknowledging the presence and significance of different English language varieties in Australia. This reflects the idea that each variety plays a part in forming Australia's cultural identity.

Introduces specific examples of the language varieties that will be discussed in the essay. This aligns with the topic's focus on the different English language varieties spoken in Australia.

Suggests the role of language in expressing and preserving cultural diversity.

Directly links back to the essay topic by reiterating the connection between language varieties and cultural diversity.

Direct use of stimulus to construct main idea in topic sentence.

Presents a contention in response to the essay topic, proposing that all language varieties should be regarded equally in terms of prestige and respect, challenging any existing biases.

often present humorous headlines that comment on Australia's political landscape while discrediting political leaders. When former US president Barack Obama visited Australia in early 2023 with an extensive security entourage, The Chaser team posted an image of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese drinking a beer, along with the headline 'Nation reassures Obama that 12 cars of security probably not needed in country where PM can be regularly found sinking beers solo at the local bowls club'. While this sentence contains multiple clauses and layers of meaning, it still upholds a grammatically correct clause structure with the subject 'Nation', verb 'reassures' and direct object 'Obama'. However, at the same time, this clause is stylistically informal and colloquial, which allows The Chaser to construct a larrikin identity that captures the quintessential Australian spirit of irreverence and laid-back attitudes. Hence, it is not the perceived formal correctness or association with higher social class that should define the prestige of SAE, but its adaptability and capacity to encompass a diverse range of expressions, identities and national values while maintaining structural integrity.

Given that over one third of the Australian residential population has been born overseas, this directly influences the diversity observed in cultural ethnolects (Stimulus D). When compared to SAE, cultural ethnolects are often deemed as inferior by language prescriptivists because they deviate from standard pronunciation and are influenced by the speaker's native or cultural language. Such narrow-minded attitudes fail to see the importance of ethnolects in the expression of cultural identity and group belonging for individuals who share a similar cultural heritage. This sense of connection is something I have experienced firsthand, being a second-generation immigrant from Asia. I adopt an Australian Malayalam ethnolect when conversing with family and friends of the same cultural background, and typically shy away from Australian English pronunciations in these contexts. This can be seen in my adoption of rhotic pronunciations such as fully pronouncing the 'r' phoneme in nouns such as 'star' and 'car'. Similarly, the 'w' phoneme is used interchangeably with the 'v' phoneme heard in lexemes such as 'vill' for 'will' and 'von't' for 'won't'. When I'm not communicating with family and friends, I consciously revert to more typical Australian English pronunciations. This suggests that my Australian Malayalam ethnolect is strongest when interacting with those who share my cultural heritage, and less pronounced when socialising with those who don't. My cultural ethnolect serves an important function in that it allows me and my family to express our Malayalam heritage and foster a sense of belonging with those that share our cultural background. Consequently, my cultural ethnolect and other varieties under the Australian English umbrella deserve equal amounts of prestige and status for the linguistic richness they add to Australia.

Concrete evidence provided to support the point being made.

Uses appropriate metalanguage to describe examples.

Body paragraph explores the prestige of SAE using contemporary evidence to highlight how it can express national values and identities even in informal settings. Addresses the essay question by arguing that the prestige of SAE lies not in its perceived formal correctness, but in its ability to convey diverse expressions.

Indirectly draws on the stimulus in the construction of the main idea in the topic sentence.

Anecdotal evidence is a powerful way to show understanding in an authentic way. Here, the writer demonstrates that they have reflected on their own language variety to show understanding of the role, value and prestige of ethnolects.

Body paragraph addresses the essay question by arguing that ethnolects contribute to the linguistic richness of Australia and should, therefore, be given the same prestige as SAE.

Acknowledging AAEs as a key feature in the expression of culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people allows for the important promotion of cultural diversity and First Nations identities within the Australian English landscape. There is increasing evidence of AAEs in mainstream media, which points to a greater understanding of its value and prestige in a culturally diverse Australian context (Stimulus D). For example, the Heart Foundation of Australia intentionally adopts yarning as a method of education in its videos, to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the importance of monitoring signs of heart attacks. This recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage allows for the effective communication of the importance of heart health, utilising culturally relevant language as a vehicle in the promotion of identity, such as through the use of kinship terms. In one instance, an Elder explains how 'all our Mob everywhere' needs to get checked. 'Mob' on this occasion is presumably used to denote all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whereas the use of the noun phrase 'family mob' later on in the same video is used to mean a close family or kinship group. While prescriptivist attitudes to AAEs would view them as being 'broken English', this value judgement fails to recognise AAEs as being standalone language varieties operating with their own set of grammatical rules and distinct language features. More notably, AAEs hold significant value for First Nations people in that they foster cultural identity, community cohesion and respectful engagement. AAEs are not just language varieties, but significant cultural markers that carry the weight of rich and enduring heritages (Stimulus C). As such, AAEs, like other language varieties under the Australian English umbrella, deserve equal prestige, acknowledging their essential role in enriching Australia's linguistic and cultural landscape.

Shows how the stimulus has been used to stimulate ideas.

Gives context for the linguistic examples that follow.

Body paragraph addresses AAEs, emphasising their importance for cultural diversity and First Nations identities within Australia. Addresses the essay topic by stressing that AAEs are a significant cultural marker and deserve equal prestige.

The broad landscape of Australian English reflects the rich cultural diversity of the nation. SAE, often held as the prestige dialect, is but one element in this vibrant tapestry. Other language varieties, including cultural ethnolects and AAEs, offer unique expressions of identity and shared experiences. They act as connectors of community and conveyors of heritage. All varieties of Australian English, irrespective of origin, enrich the nation's linguistic landscape and deserve equal prestige. As we move towards a more inclusive future, we must acknowledge and appreciate these diverse linguistic contributions, re-evaluating any misinformed notions of inferiority. Doing so fosters a richer, more unified Australian identity, honouring the multicultural spirit at its heart.

Conclusion summarises main ideas, asserting the importance of recognising all varieties of Australian English for their unique expressions of identity and shared experiences, thereby addressing the essay question for a final time. Urges for a shift in attitudes towards these language varieties, promoting their equal prestige to foster a richer, more unified Australian identity.

CHAPTER

19

The exam

Chapter 19 will be available online following the release by the VCAA of exam specifications and a sample exam for VCE English Language. The exam chapter is expected to be available from April 2024.

Scan the code or click here to access Chapter 19: The exam.

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